THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

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CONTENTS.

KING VICTOR & KING CHARLES.

A TRAGEDY.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.—*R. B.*

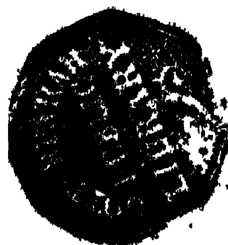
London, 1842

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia.
CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont.
POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.
D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE.—The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left and another to the right of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1.



KING VICTOR & KING CHARLES.

FIRST YEAR, 1730.—KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.
Pol. My beloved,
All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:
This cannot last for ever—oh, may change
To-day or any day!
Cha. —May change? Ah yes—
May change!
Pol. Endure it, then.
Cha. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.
My father may . . . may take to loving me;
And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him;—may even cast off her
—That bad Sebastian; but he also may
. . Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?

Pol. Now, force me
From you—me, close by you as if there gloomed
No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!
Cha. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so much
My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.
'T was war, peace—France our foe, now—England, friend—
In love with Spain—at feud with Austria! Well—
I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride
In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
When . . .
Pol. You have told me, Charles!
Cha. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!
Just so much sunshine as the cottage child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother! Had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!
Pol. I know—

Cha. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round
My neck,—they bade me rise, "for I was heir
To the Duke," they said, "the right hand of the Duke:"
Till then he was my father, not the Duke!
So . . let me finish . . the whole intricate
World's business their dead boy was born to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden must be: my faults, my follies,
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once,
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
And must put up with—me! 'T was sad enough
To learn my future portion and submit.
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look
As they discussed my insignificance,
She and my father, and I sitting by,—
I bore, I knew how brave a son they missed;
Philip had gaily run state-papers through,
While Charles was spelling at them painfully!
But Victor was my father spite of that.
"Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,
"Innumerable efforts to one end;

" And on the point now of that end's success,
" Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
" Where 's time to be reminded 't is his child
" He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely suffered
Since I had you at length!

Pol. —To serve in place
Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles!

Cha. But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like
Our lot would alter? " When he rests, takes breath,
" Glances around, and sees who 's left to love—
" Now that my mother 's dead, sees I am left—
" Is it not like he 'll love me at the last?"
Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke 's King:
Could I—precisely then—could you expect
His harshness to redouble? These few months
Have been . . have been . . Polyxena, do you
And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
What would he have? What is 't they want with me?
Him with this mistress and this minister,
—You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!

Pol. Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not
He is your father? All 's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
Or you 'll acquire his kingcraft, or he 'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there 's so much to bear.

Cha. You bear? Do not I know that you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing

Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise
When every cleephole from the hideous Court
Is stopped; the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there?
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
Not careless, never estranged,—but old: to alter
Our life, there is so much to alter!

Pol. Come—
Is it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'T were wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What 's now afoot
I wonder?—Not that any more 's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment: but guess
For me, why train so fast succeeded train
On the high-road, each gayer still than each!
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp
Bodes . . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?

Cha. Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment—

Cha. There 's our life!
Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?

Pol. Tush!
D'Ormea's contrivance!

Cha. Ay, how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?
So that the simplest courtier may remark
'T were idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-stock.
Something, 't is like, about that weary business

[*Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which* POLYXENA *examines.*

Not that I comprehend three words, of course,
After all last night's study.

Pol. The faint heart!
Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance . . (that 's the folded speech I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs) . .
—What would you have?—I fancied while you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.

Cha. Flattery!

Pol. I fancied so:—and here lurks, sure enough,
My note upon the Spanish Claims! You 've mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me;
Read—there 's bare time; you read it firmly—loud
—Rather loud, looking in his face,—don't sink
Your eye once—ay, thus! "If Spain claims . . ." begin
—Just as you look at me!

Cha. At you! Oh truly,
You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,
Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,

Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
Or worse, the clipped grey hair and dead white face
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the* KING's *apartment* D'ORMEA.

I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Here! So, King Victor
Spoke truth for once: and who 's ordained, but I
To make that memorable? Both in call,
As he declared! Were 't better gnash the teeth,
Or laugh outright now?

Cha. [*to* POL.] What 's his visit for?

D'O. [*Aside.*] I question if they even speak to me.

Pol. [*to* CHA.] Face the man! He 'll suppose you fear him, else.
[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt?

D'O. [*Aside.*] Precisely!—If I threatened him, perhaps?
Well, this at least is punishment enough!
Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis—

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ah—

So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,
Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel!

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly!
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'O. What? You know
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,
In knowledge! So! ('T is in his eye, beside—
His voice: he knows it, and his heart 's on flame
Already!) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?

Cha. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel
Your presence (smile not) through the walls, and take
Fresh heart. The King 's within that chamber?

D'O. [*Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it,*] "Spain!"

Pol. [*Aside to Cha.*] Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.
The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass!
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [*to* Cha.] Surely you will listen
—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'O. [*who has approached them, overlooks the other paper* CHARLES *continues to hold.*

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!

Cha. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You make for me at Turin) your contempt?
—Your measure?—When was not any hateful task
D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?

D'O. Not I!
Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One who in . . shall I say a year, a month?
Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle
And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince aggrieved
That I excluded him our counsels? Here

[*Touching the paper in* CHARLES's *hand.*

Accept a method of extorting gold
From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
In silver first from tillers of the soil,
Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
To make up the amount: there's counsel, sir,
My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—

Savoy 's become a mass of misery
And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King:
You 're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
Her offer follows; and he promises . . .

Cha. —Promises, sir, when he before agreed
To Austria's offer?

D'O. That 's a counsel, Prince!
But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
To make their quarrel up between themselves
Without the intervention of a friend)
Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

Cha. How?

D'O. Prince, a counsel!—And the fruit of that?
Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend, blot out his name,
Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,
Here 's Austria and here 's Spain to fight against,
And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You 're not the King!

Cha. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up: all does clear up to me!

D'O. Clear up? 'T is no such thing to envy, then?
You see the King's state in its length and breadth?
You blame me now for keeping you aloof

From counsels and the fruit of counsels?—Wait
Till I explain this morning's business!
Cha. [*Aside.*] No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no;
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!
I will do something, but at least retain
The credit of my deed! [*Aloud.*] Then it is this
You now expressly come to tell me?
D'O. This
To tell! You apprehend me?
Cha. Perfectly.
Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
For the first time these many weeks and months,
Disposed to do my bidding?
D'O. From the heart!
Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:
Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.
Acquaint the King!
D'O. [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet!
First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—
Then, to avenge it! [*To* CHA.] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*
Cha. God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
I needed e'en his intervention? No!
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.
Pol. How decides?
Cha. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?

—Could fly the court with me and live content?
So, this it is for which the knights assemble!
The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this!

Pol. What mean you?

Cha. How? You fail to catch
Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you?
These last two months of care to inculcate
How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
Were I a King—as wretched as now dull—
You recognise in it no winding up
Of a long plot?

Pol. Why should there be a plot?

Cha. The crown 's secure now; I should shame the crown—
An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress the Sebastian's child.

Pol. In truth?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
But they may descant on my dulness till
They sting me into even praying them
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state,
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
They 'd have me tender them myself my rights
As one incapable;—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!

I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.
Pol. Pause! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.
Cha. Think no ill of him!
Pol.—Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer
His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet—you are the last of a great line;
There's a great heritage at stake; new days
Seemed to await this newest of the realms
Of Europe.—Charles, you must withstand this!
Cha. Ah—
You dare not then renounce the splendid Court
For one whom all the world despises? Speak!
Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . could? Oh what happiness it were—
To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!
Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!
By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
Demonstrating in council what I am.
I have not breathed, I think, these many years!
Pol. Why, it may be!—if he desire to wed
That woman, call legitimate her child.
Cha. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!
You'll not repent confiding in me, love?

There 's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,
Than Rivoli. I 'll seek him: or, suppose
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?
—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!
I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can tell?
Once away, ever then away! I breathe.

Pol. And I too breathe.

Cha. Come, my Polyxena

KING VICTOR: PART II.

Enter KING VICTOR, *bearing the regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly.*

D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus
Among the obscure trains I have laid,—my knights
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—

[*Laying down the crown.*

This fireball to these mute black cold trains—then
Outbreak enough!
[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!
This, glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,
Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,
Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
My ancestry died wan with watching for,
To lose it!—by a slip, a fault, a trick
Learnt to advantage once and not unlearned

When past the use,—"just this once more" (I thought)
"Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
"And then away with trick!" An oversight
I'd have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now! There's peace
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help: which Europe knows,
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)
To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,
This crown, herself conceded . . .

That's to try,

Kind Europe! My career's not closed as yet!
This boy was ever subject to my will,
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea, too—
What if the sovereign also rid himself
Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I delay!
D'Ormea! [*As* D'ORMEA *enters, the King seats himself.*

My son, the Prince—attends he?

D'O. Sir,

He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.

Vic. Who's come?

The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?

D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my liege,

Your fortune had not tottered worse than now . . .
Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine—
My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows . . no, the Prince shall sign.
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
On which, I enter.
D'O. Sir, this may be truth;
You, sir, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remain worth saving! Take
My counsel as I've counselled many times!
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?
There's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you?
Vic. Aha! Come, D'Ormea,—"truth"
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England
—As who knows if not you?
D'O. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?
Vic. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—'t was
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .
D'O. Therefore your soul's ally!—who brought you through
Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
Who simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot therefore visit these

Affairs' ill fortune—whom you trust to guide
You safe (yes, on my soul) through these affairs!
Vic. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept
With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel stuffed
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight—my naval armament
When I burned Toulon. How the skiff exults
Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me, above me possibly;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?
You gave your soul to get it, you'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
Whereas it cants you to another crest;
I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!
D'O. Ah, you so much despise me?
Vic. You, D'Ormea?
Nowise: and I'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(. . Or wait, did Pianezze? . . ah, just the same!)

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly
Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade you
Prepare the schedules! But you stopped in time
You have not so assured me: how should I
Despise you then?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [*changing his tone.*] Are you instructed? Do
My order, point by point! About it, sir!

D'O. You so despise me! [*Aside.*] One last stay remains—
The boy's discretion there
[*To* CHARLES.] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,
To save you from this fate!

Cha. [*Aside.*] Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?

Vic. [*to D'O.*] Apprise Del Borgo, Spava and the rest,
Our son attends them; then return.

D'O. One word!

Cha. [*Aside.*] A moment's pause and they would drive me hence,
I do believe!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Let but the boy be firm!

Vic. You disobey?

Cha. [*To D'O.*] You do not disobey

Me, at least? Did you promise that or no?
D'O. Sir, I am yours: what would you? Yours am I!
Cha. When I have said what I shall say, 't is like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.
And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself:
That's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!
D'O. As son, the father—father as, the son!
My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*
Vic. [*Seated.*] And you, what meant you, pray,
Speaking thus to D'Ormea?
Cha. Let us not
Weary ourselves with D'Ormea! Those few words
Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.
Vic. One called to manage a kingdom, Charles, needs heart
To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.
Cha. [*Aside.*] Ah, good!
He keeps me to the point! Then be it so.
[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me certain papers—these—
To be reported on,—your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you demand?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night brought forth? Pronounce
The . . what 's your word?—result!

Cha. Sir, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains like mine, believe!
As 'tis, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
These are the papers.

Vic. Well, sir? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your result!

Cha. I never should have done great things of course,
But . . oh my father, had you loved me more!

Vic. Loved? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea played me false, I wonder?
[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—yourself
May overlook, perchance, your part in it.
Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble 's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and each,
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea, Charles!

Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.

Vic. [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him everything.
[*Aloud.*] Aha,
I apprehend you: when all 's said, you take

Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance?

Cha. —Do and ever did
So take it: 't is the method you pursue
That grieves . . . .

Vic. These words! Let me express, my friend,
Your thoughts. You penetrate what I supposed
Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!
I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Cha. To me?

Vic. Now in that chamber.

Cha. You resign
The crown to me?

Vic. And time enough, Charles, sure?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown 's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.

Cha. 'T is I will speak: you ever hated me,
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too:
Now you insult yourself; and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
You'd prove . . . what would you prove me?

Vic. This to me?
I hardly know you!

Cha. Know me? Oh indeed
You do not! Wait till I complain next time
Of my simplicity!—for here 's a sage
Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,
And his experience and his Macchiavels,
D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I this while
Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,
I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk nor slept,
For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
Who knows what we might do or might not do?
Go now, be politic, astound the world!
That sentry in the antechamber—nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[*Pointing to the crow*

That was to take me—ask them if they think
Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!

Vic. But you know me, it seems; so, learn in brief,
My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head!
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
My father!

Vic. Now observe me, sir! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
The knights assemble to see me conclude,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Cha. Farewell!
'T were vain to hope to change this: I can end it.
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
Into obscurity: I'll die for you,

But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,
Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ha, sure he 's changed again—
Means not to fall into the cunning trap!
Then, Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

Vic. [*Suddenly placing the crown upon the head of* CHARLES.]
D'Ormea, your King!
[*To* CHARLES.] My son, obey me! Charles,
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!
My reasons after; reason upon reason
After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!
By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
Why, the boy swoons! [*To D'O.*] Come this side!

D'O. [*As* CHARLES *turns from him to* VICTOR.] You persist?

Vic. Yes, I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,
He almost seems to hate you: how is that?
Be re-assured, my Charles! Is 't over now?
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

D'O. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Vic. Five minutes longer
I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—
And I 'll so turn those minutes to account
That— Ay, you recollect me! [*Aside.*] Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading
That Act of Abdication !

[*As* CHARLES *motions* D'ORMEA *to precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles !

[CHARLES *and* D'ORMEA *retire.*

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,
This earnest tone : your truth, now, for effect !
It answers every purpose : with that look,
That voice,—I hear him : "I began no treaty,"
(He speaks to Spain,) "nor ever dreamed of this
"You show me ; this I from my soul regret ;
"But if my father signed it, bid not me
"Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside :"
And, "true," says Spain, "'t were harsh to visit that
"Upon the Prince." Then come the nobles trooping :
"I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
"This hand off ere impose them ; but shall I
"Undo my father's deed ?"—and they confer :
"Doubtless he was no party, after all ;
"Give the Prince time !"

Ay, give us time, but time !
Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,
Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We 'll have no child's play, no desponding fits,
No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor
To take his crown again. Guard against that !

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles !

No—Charles's counsellor!
Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D'O. "King Charles!" What then may you be?

Vic. Anything!
A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,
Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,
Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk
To drive your trade without him. I'm Count Remont—
Count Tende—any little place's Count!

D'O. Then Victor, Captain against Catinat
At Staffarde, where the French beat you; and Duke
At Turin, where you beat the French; King late
Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
—Now, "any little place's Count"—

Vic. Proceed!

D'O. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first;
Breaker of vows to man, who kept you since;
Most profligate to me who outraged God
And man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
I was but privy to, by passing thus
To your imbecile son—who, well you know,
Must—(when the people here, and nations there,
Clamour for you the main delinquent, slipped
From King to—"Count of any little place")
Must needs surrender me, all in his reach,—
I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
See you on your return—(you will return)—
To him you trust thus for the moment!

Vic. Trust him? How?

My poor man, merely a prime minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!

D'O. In his fear,
His love, his—but discover for yourself
What you are weakest, trusting in!

Vic. Aha,
D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
In your repertory? You know old Victor—
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've heard
Talkers who little thought the King so close)
Felicitous now, were 't not, to provoke him
To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act, and call the nobles back
And pray them give again the very power
He has abjured?—for the dear sake of what?
Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such am I,
Count Tende or Count anything you please,
—Only, the same that did the things you say,
And, among other things you say not, used
Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,
Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
You and your works. Why, what on earth beside
Are you made for, you sort of ministers?

D'O. Not left, though, to my fate! Your witless son
Has more wit than to load himself with lumber:
He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Vic. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side!

D'O. Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!

Vic. Prevent, beside
My own return!

D'O. That 's half prevented now!
'T will go hard but you find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk mills to watch, vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk 's a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus!

Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!

D'O. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?

Vic. Whene'er
Sufficient time elapse for that, you judge!

[*Shouts inside* 'KING CHARLES!'

D'O. Do you repent?

Vic. [*after a slight pause*] . . . I 've kept them waiting? Yes!
Come in, complete the Abdication, sir! [*They go out.*

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol. A shout? The sycophants are free of Charles!
O is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,

Here they 've set forms for such proceedings; Victor
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,
If any, how a son 's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty 's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you
None guessed but I—strength which, untrammelled once,
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose!

So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He 's not made
Like these Italians: 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where 's the King's heir? Gone!—the Crown-prince? Gone!—
Where 's Savoy? Gone!—Sardinia? Gone! But Charles
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he look?
Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!

Now I 'll teach you my language; I 'm not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles?
[*She sees the crown.*] What is this?
Answer me—who has done this? Answer!

Cha. He!
I am King now.

Pol. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me! What, Victor? He has made you King?
What 's he then? What 's to follow this? You, King?

Cha. Have I done wrong? Yes, for you were not by!

Pol. Tell me from first to last.

Cha. Hush—a new world
Brightens before me; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
Into a shape supporting me like you,
And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.

Pol. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy
At ten years old?

Cha. He was.

Pol. And the Duke spent
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil
To be—what?

Cha. King.

Pol. Then why unking himself?

Cha. Those years are cause enough.

Pol. The only cause?

Cha. Some new perplexities.

Pol. Which you can solve

Although he cannot?

Cha. He assures me so.

Pol. And this he means shall last—how long?

Cha. How long?

Think you I fear the perils I confront?

He 's praising me before the people's face—

My people!

Pol. Then he 's changed—grown kind, the King?

Where can the trap be?

Cha. Heart and soul I pledge!

My father, could I guard the crown you gained,

Transmit as I received it,—all good else

Would I surrender!

Pol. Ah, it opens then

Before you, all you dreaded formerly?

You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?

Cha. So much to dare? The better,—much to dread?

The better. I 'll adventure though alone.

Triumph or die, there 's Victor still to witness

Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone!

Pol. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,

Or death.

Cha. But you are I! But you I call

To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven

A moment since. I will deserve the crown!

Pol. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious thing

For any people, if a heart like his,

Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

Enter VICTOR.

'T is he must show me.

Vic. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare thanks!
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here 's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated? And my light-haired blue-eyed child
Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to say
To Charles.

Cha: Pray speak, sir!

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once i' the point
Of sight. You 're now the King: you 'll comprehend
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what 's our post? Here 's Savoy and here 's Piedmont,
Here 's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
To o'er-sweep all these, what 's one weapon worth?
I often think of how they fought in Greece
(Or Rome, which was it? You 're the scholar, Charles!)
You made a front-thrust? But if your shield too
Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave
Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight if thong
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,

And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough
Were left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see!

Cha. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

Vic. 'Faith, Charles, you're not made Europe's fighting-man!
The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch
Hold and consolidate, with envious France
This side, with Austria that, the territory
I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold
Despite the couple! But I've surely earned
Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, tho' Europe wait the while.

Pol. Nay, sir,—at Chambery, away for ever,
As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid you:
Turn these few fleeting moments to account!
'T is just as though it were a death.

Vic. Indeed!

Pol. [*Aside.*] Is the trap there?

Cha. Ay, call this parting—death!
The sacreder your memory becomes.
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father?

Vic. I mean . . .

Pol. [*who watches* VICTOR *narrowly this while.*]
Your father does not mean
You should be ruling for your father's sake:
It is your people must concern you wholly
Instead of him. You mean this, sir? (He drops
My hand!)

Cha. That people is now part of me.

Vic. About the people! I took certain measures
Some short time since . . . Oh, I know well, you know
But little of my measures! These affect
The nobles; we've resumed some grants, imposed
A tax or two; prepare yourself, in short,
For clamour on that score. Mark me: you yield
No jot of aught entrusted you!

Pol. No jot
You yield!

Cha. My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,
I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this eminence
He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede
The meanest of my rights.

Vic. [*Aside.*] The boy's a fool!
—Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong here?
To-day the sweets of reigning: let to-morrow
Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

Cha. Then why delay it for an instant, sir?
That Spanish claim perchance? And, now you speak,
—This morning, my opinion was mature,
Which, boy like, I was bashful in producing
To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim

Vic. Betimes indeed Not now, Charles! You require
A host of papers on it

D'O. [*coming forward*] Here they are.
[*To* CHA.] I was the minister and much beside
Of the late monarch, to say little, him
I served on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim This case contains those papers: with them
I tender you my office

Vic. [*hastily*] Keep him, Charles!
There's reason for it—many reasons: you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but
He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me:
Do not accept those reasons have him stay!

Pol. [*Aside*] His minister thrust on us!

Cha. [*to* D'ORMEA] Sir, believe,
In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending howsoe'er might seem
My feelings toward you, as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall myself (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help

Is necessary. Think the past forgotten
And serve me now!

D'O. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve you, sir!
As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. But dispatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living! Help to house me safe
Ere with D'Ormea you set the world agape!
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs?
I get as far from you as possible:
Here's what I reckon my expenditure.

Cha. [*reading*.] A miserable fifty thousand crowns!

Vic. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen!
Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out
All that, yourself!

Cha. [*still reading*.] "Count Tende"—what means this?

Vic. Me: you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France.
Had only my allies kept true to me!
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .

D'O. —The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.

Cha. How, sir?

Vic. [*to* D'ORMEA.] Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To* CHARLES.] That anon!

Cha. [*to* D'ORMEA.] Explain what you have said, sir!

D'O. I supposed

The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Pol. [*Aside.*] With us

The minister—with him the mistress!

Cha. [*to* VICTOR.] No—

Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall!

Vic. And where's the crime . . .

Pol. [*to* CHARLES.] True, sir, this is a matter past recall

And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this—now
Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:
What the Count did, is no concern of yours.

Cha. [*after a pause.*] The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!

Vic. Why, my son,

I took some ill advised . . . one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything: though I was over-reached,
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!

D'O. [*without regarding* VICTOR, *and leisurely.*]

Thus stands the case with Spain:

When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany. . . .

Vic I tell you that stands over! Let that rest!
There is the policy!

Cha. [*to* D'ORMEA.] Thus much I know,
And more—too much: the remedy?

D'O. Of course!
No glimpse of one.

Vic. No remedy at all!
It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.

D'O. [*to* CHARLES.] But if . . .

Vic. [*still more hastily.*] In fine, I shall take care of that;
And, with another project that I have . . .

D'O. [*turning on him.*] Oh, since Count Tende means to take again
King Victor's crown!—

Pol. [*throwing herself at* VICTOR'S *feet.*] E'en now retake it, sir!
Oh, speak! We are your subjects both, once more!
Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,
Nor do mean now, to take it: but you must!
'T is in you—in your nature—and the shame 's
Not half the shame 't would grow to afterwards!

Cha. Polyxena!

Pol. A word recalls the knights—
Say it!—What 's promising and what 's the past?
Say you are still King Victor!

D'O. Better say
The Count repents, in brief! [VICTOR *rises.*

Cha. With such a crime
I have not charged you, sir!
Pol. Charles turns from me!

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA *and* D'ORMEA.—*A pause.*

Pol. And now, sir, what have you to say?
D'O. Count Tende . . .
Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve
On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
The capital, because you know King Charles
Tarries a day or two at Evian baths
Behind me:—but take warning,—here and thus
[*Seating herself in the royal seat.*
I listen, if I listen—not your friend.
Explicitly the statement, if you still
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:
I am not made for aught else.
D'O. Good! Count Tende . . .
Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles
Who even more mistrusts you.
D'O. Does he so?
Pol. Why should he not?
D'O. Ay, why not? Motives, seek
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve

God at the devil's bidding—will that do?
I 'm proud: our people have been pacified,
Really I know not how—

Pol. By truthfulness.

D'O. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do
With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay: but here
'T is otherwise, and my pride 's piqued. Count Tende
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.

Pol. When?

D'O. Let 's think.
Home matters settled—Victor 's coming now;
Let foreign matters settle—Victor 's here
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

Pol. [*reading the papers he presents.*] If this should prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?
You seek annoyances to give pretext
For what you say you fear!

D'O. Oh, possibly!
I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please!

Pol. Half of your tale is true; most like, the Count
Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.

D'O. Keep safe

Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof
I thus have counselled! when the Count returns,
And the King abdicates, 't will stead me little
To have thus counselled.

Pol. The King abdicate!

D'O. He 's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—
Firm, let us hope:—but I 'd have gone to work
With him away. Well!

[CHARLES *without.*] In the Council Chamber?

D'O. All 's lost!

Pol. Oh, surely not King Charles! He 's changed—
That 's not this year's care-burthened voice and step:
'T is last year's step, the Prince's voice!

D'O. I know.

[*Enter* CHARLES—D'ORMEA *retiring a little.*

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me
The old way! [*She embraces him.*
There was too much cause for that!
But I have found myself again. What news
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load
I 'm free of—free! I said this year would end
Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God!

Pol. How, Charles?

Cha. You do not guess? The day I found
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
And how my father was involved in it,
Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no more
Until I cleared his name from obloquy.

We did the people right—'t was much to gain
That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—
But that took place here, was no crying shame:
All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold
The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'O. [*Aside.*] I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Cha. Not a soul
Is compromised: the blotted past 's a blank:
Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!
It reached me from Vienna; I remained
At Evian to dispatch the Count his news;
'T is gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I: do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me?

D'O. [*Coming forward.*] He knows that?

Cha. What, in Heaven's name, means this?

D'O. He knows that matters
Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!
Plainly, unless you post this very hour
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery
And take precautions I acquaint you with,
Your father will return here.

Cha. Are you crazed?

D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return
To take his crown!

D'O. He will return for that.

Cha. [*to* POLYXENA.] You have not listened to this man?

Pol. He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from his arms.*

Cha. [*to* D'ORMEA.] What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

D'O. Me?
His heart, sir, you may not be used to read
Such evidence however, therefore read

[*Pointing to* POLYXENA'S *papers.*

My evidence.

Cha. [*to* POLYXENA.] Oh, worthy this of you!
And of your speech I never have forgotten,
Though I professed forgetfulness, which haunts me
As if I did not know how false it was;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
That there might be no least occasion left
For aught of its prediction coming true!
And now, when there is left no least occasion
To instigate my father to such crime—
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
That speech and recognize Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders
Still in your hand! Silent?

Pol. As the wronged are.

Cha. And you, D'Ormea, since when have you presumed
To spy upon my father? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when?

D'O. The when and where and how belong
To me. 'T is sad work, but I deal in such.
You ofttimes serve yourself, I'd serve you here:
Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,
Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Cha. You hate my father?

D'O. Oh, just as you will!
[*Looking at* POLYXENA.
A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!
What matter?—if you ponder just one thing:
Has he that treaty?—he is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here?

Cha. Well for you
They are not! [*To* POL.] Him I knew of old, but you—
To hear that pickthank, further his designs! [*To* D'O.
Guards?—were they here, I'd bid them, for your trouble,
Arrest you.

D'O. Guards you shall not want. I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your need.
You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge—its duty

Would bid me press you read those documents.
Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*

Cha. [*taking it.*] The papers also!—Do you think
I dare not read them?

Pol. Read them, sir!

Cha. They prove,
My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,
Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O. Even say, Chambery!
'T is vacant, I surmise, by this.

Cha. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!
Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,
You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!
Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
False charges—my heart's love of other times!

Pol. Ah, Charles!

Cha. [*to* D'ORMEA.] Precede me, sir!

D'O. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[*As they go out, enter—by the middle door, at which he pauses—*VICTOR.

Vic. Sure I heard voices? No. Well, I do best
To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.
The old room! Nothing changed! So near my seat,

D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the* KING'S *chair.*

I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea, slow
To hearten me, the supple knave? That burst
Of spite so eased him! He 'll inform me . . .

What?

Why come I hither? All 's in rough: let all
Remain rough. There 's full time to draw back—nay,
There's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never.

'Faith,

This kind of step is pitiful, not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither because
He 's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!
But thus it is. The age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:
But one's old age, when graces drop away
And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
Ah, loathsome!

Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army 's mine—I 've witnessed
Each private fight beneath me; all the Court 's
Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea 's still
D'Ormea and mine. There 's some grace clinging yet.
Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I 'd take the crown.

No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest
Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque
Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and hot blood,—
The young King, crowned, but calm before his time.
They say,—the eager mistress with her taunts,—
And the sad earnest wife who motions me
Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet
I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.

Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin—yes, or no?
'T is this relentless noonday lighted chamber,
Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. That 's the change must strike.
No silence last year! Some one flung doors wide
(Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)
And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:

That makes the misery of this return.
Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
When the spent monster went upon its knees
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France, beat down
By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge.
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all 's lost, for ever lost,
There 's no more Victor when the world wakes up!
Then silence, as of a raw battle field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days
After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood) there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,
Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Begging a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow
The coin you fling into his cap! And last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
O' the market-place, where takes the old king breath
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no—or no?

[*Re-enter* CHARLES *with papers.*

Cha. Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures!
[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor!
[*Turning, he discovers* VICTOR.
Vic. [*after a pause.*] Not at Evian, Charles?
What's this? Why do you run to close the doors?
No welcome for your father?
Cha. [*Aside.*] Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That's gone for ever.
Vic. Must
I ask once more . . .
Cha. No—I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your health declines;
True, Chambery's a bleak unkindly spot;
You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
Veneria, or Moncaglier—ay, that's close
And I concede it.
Vic. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
Dated from Evian Baths . . .
Cha. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied

The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—

Vic. Charles?

Cha. —Me, set
For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And

Sir, this way of wiles were good to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!
Though I sink under it! What brings you here?

Vic. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity!

Cha. —You mean,
Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise! But turn not that
To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?
Is aught deficient in your equipage?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!

Vic. [*Aside.*] Here is the grateful much-professing son
Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake
I think to waive my plans of public good!
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,

What would be warrant for this bitterness?
I gave it—grant I would resume it—well?
Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:
And as you then intended . . .
Vic. Fool! What way
Could I intend or not intend? As man,
With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"
I can intend up to a certain point,
No further. I intended to preserve
The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
And if events arise demonstrating
The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like
To lose it . . .
Cha. Keep within your sphere and mine!
It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk
By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;
All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there's my truth.
Vic. Truth, boy, is here, within my breast; and in
Your recognition of it, truth is, too;
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,
Truth for the world! But you are right: these themes
Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,

What I must bring about. I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—
To hold what he is nearly letting go,
Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps
There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since: till I give
That island with the rest, my work's half done
For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules
Cha. Our sakes are one; and that, you could not say,
Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith:—a year has wrought an age's change
This people's not the people now, you once
Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.
Vic. [*with an outburst*.] I know it! You undo
All I have done—my life of toil and care!
I left you this the absolutest rule
In Europe: do you think I will sit still
And see you throw power to the populace—
See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,
Join in the mad and democratic whirl
Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide?
England casts off her kings; France mimics England:
This realm I hoped was safe. Yet here I talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone,
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
Fasten upon my disobedient . . . !
[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
I could say this—if minded so—my son?

Cha. You could not. Bitterer curses than your curse
Have I long since denounced upon myself
If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

Vic. No!
But no! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
When he was fortunate and young—

Cha. My father!

Vic. Stay yet!—and if he said he could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up whole, sound and impregnable,
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as you may choose!
—If I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts!

Stay, Charles! I see you letting me pretend
To live my former self once more—King Victor,
The venturous yet politic: they style me
Again the Father of the Prince: friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon my dotage! You
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is't not in your breast my brow is hid?
Is not your hand extended? Say you not

[*Enter* D'ORMEA, *leading in* POLYXENA.

Pol. [*advancing and withdrawing* CHARLES—*to* VICTOR.]
In this conjuncture even, he would say
(Though with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
The suppliant is my father. I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him fling
His well-earned fame away: there must not follow
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles
—Body, that's much,—and soul, that's more—and realm,
That's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

D'O. Do you repent, sir?

Vic. [*resuming himself.*] D'Ormea? This is well!
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear

The little your importunate father thrust
Himself on you to say!—Ah, they'll correct
The amiable blind facility
You show in answering his peevish suit.
What can he need to sue for? Bravely, D'Ormea,
Have you fulfilled your office: but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some few more livres
To swell his income! Had you, lady, missed
The moment a permission would be granted
To buttress up my ruinous old pile!
But you remember properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
I might have looked for!

Cha. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!

Vic. I'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay—
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier
—Who knows?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit?

Cha. Adieu!

Vic. Charles—Charles!

Cha. Adieu!

[VICTOR goes.

Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear!
'T was for another purpose the Count came.
The Count desires Moncaglier. Give the order!

D'O. [*leisurely.*] Your minister has lost your confidence,
Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Rende would— .

Cha. [*flinging his badge back.*] Be still the minister!
And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:
Loose it!

D'O. There's none to loose, alas!—I see
I never am to die a martyr.

Pol. Charles!

Cha. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise!

KING CHARLES. PART II.

D'ORMEA *seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles
Or else King Victor—that's a balance: but now,
D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point to solve,
My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!
When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,
Impart to me among the rest! No matter.
Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
To us the wrongful; lesson them this once!

For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;
A tree so long was stunted; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it?
'Twas a stump then, a stump it still must be:
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.
Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

Enter CHARLES *and* POLYXENA *with* Attendants.

D'O. [*rises.*] Sir, in the due discharge of this my office—
This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Cha. Well, sir?

D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.

Cha. What wound you utter?

D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk!
My kingdom is in imminent danger?

D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies:
What forces can I muster presently?

[D'ORMEA *hands papers which* CHARLES *inspects.*

Cha. Good—very good. Montorio . . how is this?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?

D'O. Since his land has been relieved
From double imposts, this he manages:
But under the late monarch . .

Cha. Peace! I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'O. Count Spava means to head his troops himself.
Something to fight for now; "Whereas," says he,
"Under the sovereign's father" . .

Cha. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'O. Yes.

[*To* POLYXENA *while* CHARLES *continues to inspect the papers.*

A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;
He terrifies men and they fall not off;
Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.

But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway: our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought them peace.
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
They love you, sir!

Cha. [*to Attendants.*] Bring the regalia forth!
Quit the room! And now, Marquis, answer me!
Why should the King of France invade my realm?

D'O. Why? Did I not acquaint your Majesty
An hour ago?

Cha. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'O. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.

Cha. And your reason
For saying this?

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ay, just his father's way!
[*To* CH.] The Count wrote yesterday to your forces' Chief,
Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Cha. To try
Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood: aught else?

D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some hours after,
The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication: he refusing,

Or hesitating, rather—

Cha. What ensued?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,
He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to the Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.

Cha. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then?

D'O. They told it me.
And I—

Cha. Most faithful—

D'O. Tell it you—with this
Moreover of my own: if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
On his road to France for succour.

Cha. Very good!
You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt?

D'O. I give my counsel, and the only one.
A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang:
But now the harsher course must be pursued.
These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list
Of those suspected merely—men to watch;
This—of the few of the Count's very household
You must, however reluctantly, arrest;

While here's a method of remonstrance—sure
Not stronger than the case demands—to take
With the Count's self.

Cha. Deliver those three papers.

Pol. [*while* CHARLES *inspects them—to* D'ORMEA.]
Your measures are not over harsh, sir: France
Will hardly be deterred from her intents
By these.

D'O. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he'll say at my presenting!

Cha. [*who has signed them.*] There!
About the warrants! You've my signature.
What turns you pale? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [*reading them separately.*] Arrest the people I suspected merely?

Cha. Did you suspect them?

D'O. Doubtless: but—but—sir,
This Forquieri's governor of Turin,
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital! Rabella, too?
Why, sir—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me!

D'O. [*still reading.*] You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list?
Sir—

Cha. But you never bade arrest those men,
So close related to my father too,

On trifling grounds?

D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,
Is hatching treason! still —
[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What's here?
Arrest the wife herself?

Cha. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well?

D'O. [*who has read the last paper.*] Wherefore am I
thus ruined? Why not take
My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it
You, madam! I have served you, am prepared
For all disgraces: only, let disgrace
Be plain, be proper — proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
Take back your warrant, I will none of it!

Cha. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!
He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
I bid him . . .

D'O. Not you! Were he trebly false,
You do not bid me . . .

Cha. Is 't not written there?
I thought so: give — I'll set it right.

D'O. Is it there?
Oh yes, and plain — arrest him now — drag here
Your father! And were all six times as plain,
Do you suppose I trust it?

Cha. Just one word!
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
Or else your life is forfeit.
D'O. Ay, to Turin
I bring him, and to-morrow?
Cha. Here and now!
The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
As I believed and as my father said.
I knew it from the first, but was compelled
To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,
That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
The miserable sower of such discord
'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.
Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
A sick old peevish man—wrings hasty speech,
An ill-considered threat from him; that 's noted:
Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
The day by day report of your paid spies—
And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,
And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,
But you were in bare time! Only, 't were best
I never saw my father—these old men
Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
D'Ormea 's the man I cannot do without!
Pol. Charles—
Cha. Ah, no question! You against me too
You 'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die

With this he coiled about me, choking me!
No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you say,
Upon my father's perfidy: and I
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though I do—do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorize
These measures, and I will. Perugia!
[*Many* Officers *enter.*] Count—
You and other, with all the force you have,
Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,
Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that's likest one
At present, fronts me; you are at his back
For a full hour! he undertakes to show
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night! The clemency you blame
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,
Too long abjured.
[*To* D'ORMEA.] Now, sir, about the work!
To save your king and country! Take the warrant!
D'O. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count Perugia?
Obey me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Montcaglier!
Cha. [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormea! [D'ORMEA *goes.*
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!
[*To* POLYXENA *after a pause.*
At least you understand all this?

Pol. These means
Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way; I should have else
Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,
Polyxena?

Pol. You then believe the story
In spite of all—that Victor's coming?

Cha. Believe it?
I know that he is coming—feel the strength
That has upheld me leave me at his coming!
'Twas mine, and now he takes his own again.
Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;
But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!
I meant to keep it; but I cannot—cannot!
Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first . . .
See if he would not be the first to taunt me
With having left his kingdom at a word,
With letting it be conquered without stroke,
With . . . no—no—'tis no worse than when he left!
I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
We'll fly away—fly, for I loathe this Turin,
This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.
We'd best go to your country—unless God
Send I die now!

Pol. Charles, hear me!

Cha. And again
Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me

Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking!
I would not let you speak just now, for fear
You'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,
As we two used to talk in blessed times:
Bid me endure all his caprices; take me
From this mad post above him!

Pol. I believe
We are undone, but from a different cause.
All your resources, down to the least guard,
Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,
He act in concert with your father? We
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
Where find a better place for them?

Cha. [*pacing the room.*] And why
Does Victor come? To undo all that's done,
Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
... Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that's false—
False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false!
The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,
Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
I saw—

Pol. But if your measures take effect,
D'Ormea true to you?

Cha. Then worst of all!
I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!
Well may the woman taunt him with his child—
I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea
To outrage him! We talk—perchance he tears
My father from his bed; the old hands feel
For one who is not, but who should be there:
He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!
The crowded chamber when the lights go out—
Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
The accursed prompting of the minute! My guards!
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!

Pol. [*seizing his hand*] King Charles! Pause here upon this strip of time
Allotted you out of eternity!
Crowns are from God: in his name you hold yours.
Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life
Should be abjured along with rule; but now,
Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule—
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—
Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli
Would be illumined! While, as 't is, no doubt,
Something of stain will ever rest on you;
No one will rightly know why you refused
To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you could

Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect
Future achievement will blot out the past,
Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Live happy any more. 'T will be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty 's seen
As palpably as now—the months, the years
Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace rooms
Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye
May turn to mine and find no comfort there,
Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
Of other courses, with far other issues,
We might have taken this great night: such bear,
As I will bear! What matters happiness?
Duty! There 's man's one moment: this is yours!

[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places him on his seat: a long pause and silence.

Enter D'ORMEA *and* VICTOR.

Vic. At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!
'T is you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who 's King of us?

Cha. [*from his seat.*] Count Tende . . .

Vic. What your spies
Assert I ponder in my soul, I say
Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose
To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—
For still its potency surrounds the weak
White locks their felon hands have discomposed.
Or I 'll not ask who 's King, but simply, who

Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!
I have no friend in the wide world: nor France
Nor England cares for me: you see the sum
Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

Cha. Take it, my father!

And now say in turn,
Was it done well, my father—sure not well,
To try me thus! I might have seen much cause
For keeping it—too easily seen cause!
But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
My life had pined away, than pine it will.
Already you have much to answer for.
My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
Were happy once! No doubt my people think
I am their King still . . . but I cannot strive!
Take it!

Vic. [*one hand on the crown* CHARLES *offers, the other on his neck.*] So few years give it quietly,
My son! It will drop from me. See you not?
A crown 's unlike a sword to give away—
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!
But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
Young as this head: yet mine is weak enough,
E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!
All is alike gone by with me—who beat
Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines!
To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis' rival,
And now . . .

Cha. [*putting the crown on him, to the rest*] The King
speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

Vic. I am then King! As I became a King
Despite the nations, kept myself a King,
So I die King, with Kingship dying too
Around me! I have lasted Europe's time!
What wants my story of completion? Where
Must needs the damning break show? Who mistrusts
My children here—tell they of any break
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
And who were by me when I died but they?
D'Ormea there!

Cha. What means he?

Vic. Ever there!
Charles—how to save your story? Mine must go!
Say—say that you refused the crown to me!
Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured
Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then die—
That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
The world!

Cha. Mistrust me? Help!

Vic. Past help, past reach!
'Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,
Would have denied and so disgraced me.

Pol. Charles
Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!
He reigned at first through setting up yourself

As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
'T was from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character: he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;
But so it was.

Cha. [*to* POLYXENA.] I love you now indeed!
[*To* VICTOR.] You never knew me!

Vic. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other things
Because the time for using them is past.
If 't were to do again! That's sadly wished.
Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes:
I've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly: I've ploughed the deep lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.
No matter. Guile has made me King again.
Louis—'t was in King Louis' time—long time,
When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned.
How the world talks already of us two!
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then?

Ha! Where lurks he?
D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now stand!
[*Collecting his strength as* D'ORMEA *approaches.*
You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent. [*Dies.*

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

In a late edition were collected and redistributed the pieces first published in 1842, 1845 and 1855 respectively, under the titles of "Dramatic Lyrics," "Dramatic Romances," and "Men and Women." It is not worth while to disturb this arrangement.

Part of the Poems were inscribed to my dear friend John Kenyon; I hope the whole may obtain the honour of an association with his memory.

R. B.

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

CAVALIER TUNES.*

I. *MARCHING ALONG.*

I.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!

* Such Poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of 'Dramatic Pieces;' being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.—*R. B.*

Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you 're—

(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might,
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(Chorus) March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

I

King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—
(Chorus) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
(Chorus) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
"I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
(Chorus) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others, she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:

How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX."

[16—]

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he,
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three'
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate bolt undrew,
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through,
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast

II

Not a word to each other, we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place,
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting, but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear,

At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Duffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
"We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,

And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD EL KADR.

1842.

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?

Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)

All that 's meant me — satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I 'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS.

I

My heart sank with our Claret flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask,
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen

II

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady,
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;

And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
Shrugged his hump shoulder, to tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder:
And so, with his sword hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting!

— — —

Here 's to Nelson's memory!
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much:
Here 's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
To Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder,
"For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
"Jigging, as it were, and zig zag-zigging
"Up against the mizen-rigging!"

GARDEN FANCIES

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE 's the garden she walked across,
  Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
  Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
  As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail my chance foot spurned,
  To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II

Down this side of the gravel-walk
  She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
  To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
  I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you, noble roses, I know;
  But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
  Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;

Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
  Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
  Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
  Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
  I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
  Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
  There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
  Searching after the bud she found.

V.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
  Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
  Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
  Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
  Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
  Whither I follow her, beauties flee;

Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
  June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
  Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
— Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
  Roses, you are not so fair after all!

— —

II SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
  He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
  Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
  Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
  Just when the birds sang all together.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
  And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
  From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
  As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
  And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
  An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont levis
  In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
  When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
  Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
  —At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate:
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
  To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in doors, brought out a loaf,
  Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
  Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
  And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
  And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
  And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake;
  And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover?
—When the water beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

VIII.

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic,

IX.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
  Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good bye, mother beetle, husband-eft, *sufficit!*
  See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!
A's book shall prop you up, B's shall cover you,
  Here's C to be grave with, or D to be gay,
And with E on each side, and F right over you,
  Dry rot at ease till the Judgment day!

—

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.

I

GR-R-R— there go, my heart's abhorrence!
  Water your damned flower pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
  God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle bush wants trimming?
  Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
  Hell dry you up with its flames!

II

At the meal we sit together:
  Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
  Sort of season, time of year:

Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
  Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt
What's the Latin name for "parsley?"
  What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

III

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished
  Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire new spoon we're furnished,
  And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
  Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L for our initial!
  (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
  Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
  Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
  —Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
  (That is, if he'd let it show!)

V

When he finishes refection,
  Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
  As do I, in Jesu's praise.

I the Trinity illustrate,
  Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
  While he drains his at one gulp.

VI.

Oh, those melons? If he's able
  We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
  All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
  Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
  Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII.

There's a great text in Galatians,
  Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
  One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
  Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
  Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel
  On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
  Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:

If I double down its pages
  At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
  Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

IX

Or, there 's Satan!—one might venture
  Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
  As he 'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
  We 're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
  Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r—you swine!

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears
  flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

IV

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

V

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

VII

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII.

What a drop! She 's not little, no minion like me!
That 's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, "no!"
To that pulse's magnificent come and go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain:
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close.
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II.

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
"The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
"Despair not—strenuously retrieve!
"Nay, I will turn this love of thine
"To lawful love, almost divine;

VI.

"For he is young, and led astray,
"This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
"To change the laws of church and state;
"So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
"Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
"Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed
"Of all his plans, and next day steal
"To me, and all those plans reveal,
"That I and every priest, to purge
"His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy,
Tell me, as lovers should, heart free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
And I lay listening in such pride!
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning light
To save his soul in his despite.

X

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray
"The one spot from his soul away;
"To-night he comes, but not the same
"Will look!" At night he never came.

XI

Nor next night: on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty; something drew
My steps into the street; I knew
It led me to the market place
Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block . . God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

XIII

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No heaven with them, no hell!—and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

CRISTINA.

I

She should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there 's my weakness)
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
"Of some lone shore with its pearl seed,
"That the sea feels'—no "strange yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish
"Where there 's chance of least returning."

III

Oh we 're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
  As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
  Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
  While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
  With some other soul to mingle?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
  And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
  Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
  Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
  Mine and her souls rushed together?

VII.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
  The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
  Never fear but there 's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
  Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
  Just so much more prize their capture!

VIII

Such am I: the secret 's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul 's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come the next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I

All 's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

II

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns grey.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign:

IV.

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
  Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
  Though it stay in my soul for ever!—

V.

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
  Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
  Or so very little longer!



EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

See, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled through its binding osier rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE.

So, the year's done with!
  (Love me for ever!)

All March begun with,
  April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
  June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
  Quenching June's fever—
  (Love me for ever!)

— — — — —

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING.

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me

SONG.

I.

Nay but you, who do not love her,
  Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
  Aught like this tress, see, and this tress
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II

Because, you spend your lives in praising,
  To praise, you search the wide world over.
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
  If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I

LET's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep!

II

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III

See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

V

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI

Be a god and hold me
  With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
  With thine arm!

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love!
  As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
  Think thy thought—

VIII

Meet, if thou require it,
  Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
  In thy hands

IX

That shall be to morrow
  Not to-night.
I must bury sorrow
  Out of sight

X.

—Must a little weep, Love,
  (Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
  Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE.

I

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!
  Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
  She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
  Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
  Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died!
  Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
  Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
  And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
  And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
  What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
  Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
  And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
  We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV

No, indeed! for God above
  Is great to grant, as mighty to make.
And creates the love to reward the love.
  I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
  Through worlds I shall traverse not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
  Ere the time be come for taking you

V

But the time will come,—at last it will,
  When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still
  That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
  And your mouth of your own geranium's red
And what you would do with me, in fine,
  In the new life come in the old one's stead

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
  Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
  Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes,
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
  Either I missed or itself missed me
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
  What is the issue? let us see!

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
  My heart seemed full as it could hold?
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
  And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:
  See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
  You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
    Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
    Half asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
    As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
    (So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
    Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
    Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
    As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer time o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

IV

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
        Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
        Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced
        As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
        Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
        Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
        In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
        Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
        Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
        For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
        Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
        Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
        Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

I

Oh, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,

And the South dries the hawthorn-spray
Only, my Love's away!
I 'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well

III

Dearest, three months ago
When we lived blocked up with snow,—
When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go
Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

I

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws
We would try and trace
One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws,
Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

V

What 's in the "Times"?—a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold;
He has taken a bride
To his gruesome side,
That 's as fair as himself is bold:
There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sunflowers blow
In a solid glow,
And to break now and then the screen—
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between!

VII

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger-tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn!

VIII

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,

Each with arm o'er neck:
'Tis our quarter deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean space!
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging cap and vest!
'Tis a huge fur cloak—
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep

'T was a time when the heart could show
All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—
'T was a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
Me, your own, your You,—
Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past—
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true,
And the beauteous and the right,—
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white!

XVI.

What of a hasty word?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?
See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred—
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care?
'T is the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII.

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows;

We shall have the word
In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows:
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI

Each in the crypt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?
"When a heart, as chill,
"At my own would thrill

"Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
"Heart, shall we live or die?
"The rest, settle by and by!"

XXII

So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before
It is twelve o'clock
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore!

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city square,
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast,
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
–I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair 's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there 's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry,
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters who hurries by,
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high,
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:
You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at
 once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
 fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red
 bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick
 and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to
 spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-
 bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
 paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not
 abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist
 in a sort of sash.

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you
 linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
 forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
So and so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and
Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the skirts
of Saint Paul has reached,
"Having preached us those six Lent lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached."
Noon strikes, here sweeps the procession! our Lady
borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
stuck in her heart!
Bang, whang, whang goes the drum, *tootle te-tootle* the fife,
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest plea-
sure in life.

X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at
double the rate
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil
pays passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not
the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity,
the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with
cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the
yellow candles,

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross
    with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better
    prevention of scandals
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city square, there is no such pleasure in
    life!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

I

Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf
    and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy
    mind!

II

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all the
    good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants
    were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the
    sea with rings?

III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there; and 't is arched
    by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept
    the carnival:
I was never out of England—it 's as if I saw it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

V

Was a lady, such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

VI

Well, and it was graceful of them they'd break talk off and afford
— She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions —"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths —"Life might last! we can but try!"

VIII.

"Were you happy?"—"Yes"—"And are you still as happy?"—"Yes And you?"
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did *I* stop them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX.

So, an octave struck the answer Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

X.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro' every nerve.

XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

XIII.

"Yours for instance, you know physics, something of geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV.

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

XV.

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

I

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
  The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
  Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
  In the valley beneath where, white and wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
  Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
  Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
  As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
  The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
  But why did it more than startle me?

III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
  Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endure
  Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know!
I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
  To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
  When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead
  Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp curled leaf which they never shed)
  'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
  By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
  Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
  For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
  But with empty cells of the human hive;
—With the chapter room, the cloister porch,
  The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
  Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
  Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
  Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
  Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
  The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
  They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
  Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
  Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
  'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reck of your praise and you!
  But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
  Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,
  Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
  Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield returns,
  And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiffs girns
  And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
  Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
  For his peerless painting? (see Vasari.)

X.

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
  What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
  For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
  With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
  'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy.

XI.

"If you knew their work you would deal your dole."
  May I take upon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
  Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—
The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
  Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
  And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
  As you might have been, as you cannot be;
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
  And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
  And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
  And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
  Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
  Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?
  You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow:
  You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
  Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
  You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.
—When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,
  The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
  And grow here according to God's clear plan.

XV

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
  You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
  Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
  In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
  For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

XVI.

To day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us, we are rough hewn no wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII.

'Tis a life long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction?

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
  To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
  "And paint man, man, whatever the issue!
"Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
  "New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters:
"To bring the invisible full into play!
  "Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

XX.

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
  For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
  Beats the last of the old; 't is no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
  Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honour them now! (ends my allocution)
  Nor confer your degree when the folks leave college.

XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
  That when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
  Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins—
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
  Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
  Only the scale 's to be changed, that 's all.

XXII.

Yet I hardly know   When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter— who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic meed.
So, now to my special grievance—heigh ho!

XXIV.

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er:
—No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance;
"Works never conceded to England's thick clime!"
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, how a captive might be out ferreted?
Why is it they never remember me?

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose,
Nor the wronged Lippino, and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's·
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
  With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
  You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
  Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
  The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX

They pass, for them the panels may thrill,
  The tempera grow alive and tinglish,
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
  Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
  Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
  Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

XXX

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
  Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,—
Oh, never! it shall not be counted true—
  That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
  Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
  Turns up at last! and to whom?—to whom?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII.

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

This time we'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot—
No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV.

How we shall prologuize, how we shall perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
 Make of the want of the age no mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
 And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo*:
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
While "God and the People" plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky?
At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

I

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the bean-flowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,

And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her Calais)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it 'Italy.'
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I

Oh, to be in England!
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

II

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-East distance dawned Gibraltar grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL.

I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
"Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent

"Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
"Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
"For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
"To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
"And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II.

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
"On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
"Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
"Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;

Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross support in the centre, that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star,
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!

God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear him along
"With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm seeds not here
"To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
"Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! No spirit feels waste,
"Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
"The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
"Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
"And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

"And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
"And the locust flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
"And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
"That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
"How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
"All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!
"Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
"When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
"Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
"The low song of the nearly departed, and hear her faint tongue
"Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,
"'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best!'
"Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
"And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
"Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true;

“ And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
“ Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
“ Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch, a people is thine,
“ And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine !
“ On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
“ That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go)
“ High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
“ Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul !”

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—“ Saul !” cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer. One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.

What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt
hope and despair,
Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile
his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith
to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 't was
Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt
any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow
decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and
entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm
folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next
should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song
filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond,
on what fields,

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?
He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
"Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
"Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
"And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now these old trains

Of vague thought came again, I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit as thus—

XIII

"Yea, my King,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
"From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
"In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
"Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
"Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
"The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too, in turn
"Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was to learn,
"E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
"When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight
"Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch
"Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall staunch
"Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.

"Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!
"By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
"More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
"Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou hast done
"Dies, revives, goes to work in the world, until e'en as the sun
"Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,
"Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere trace
"The results of his past summer prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
"Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
"Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they too give forth
"A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the North
"With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
"But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.
"As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
"So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.

'No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the years!
"Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!
"Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise
"A grey mountain of marble heaped four square, till, built to the skies,
"Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
"Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
"In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he did;
"With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
"For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
"In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
"(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise, and record
"With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
"Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
"With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet winds rave:
"So the pen gives unborn generations their due and then put

"In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!"

XIX.

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves

The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV.

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlet of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile

Of his armour and war cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there,
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?

I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
"I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this,
"I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
"As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! outbroke—

XVII.

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
"I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
"And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
"His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
"I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law.
"Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
"To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop was asked.
"Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
"Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!

"Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
"I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
"In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
"In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
"And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
"(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
"The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
"As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
"Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
"I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
"There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
"I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
"Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
"E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!
"But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
"God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.

"—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
"Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
"In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
"That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
"Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
"And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
"Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of the marvellous dower
"Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
"Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
"And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
"These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height

"This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?
"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
"Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake
"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
"Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
"To be run and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
"The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
"And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII.

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
"All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
"As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
"From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:

"*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
"To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
"Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
"This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
"See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
"Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
"To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
"I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
"Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
"One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
"As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
"Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!

"He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
"'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
"A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
"Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
"Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth –
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth ,
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills ,
In the shuddering forests' held breath , in the sudden wind thrill
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread , in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe
E'en the serpent that slid away silent —he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers ,
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine bowers .
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so!"

MY STAR.

All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird, like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me, therefore I love it.

BY THE FIRESIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn evenings come;
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
  O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
  And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
  "There he is at it, deep in Greek:
"Now then, or never, out we slip
  "To cut from the hazels by the creek
"A mainmast for our ship!"

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
  Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
  To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

V

The outside frame, like your hazel-trees —
  But the inside archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
  And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
  Knowing so well the leader's hand:

Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
  Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
  Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
  Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
  The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
  The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX

Does it feed the little lake below?
  That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
  How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
  And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
  The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;

Cut hemp stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
  See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
  On a festa day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
  Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII

To drop from the charcoal burners' huts,
  Or climb from the hemp dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
  Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
  With its bit of fresco half moon wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
  'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though.
  For a pent house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
  Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!

XXIII.

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;

And you, too, find without rebuff
  Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh stuff.

XXV.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
  This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
  To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct!
  At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
  In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands
  The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
  How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII.

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
  Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
  See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XIX

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XX

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXI

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,

And still I questioned or replied,
  While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
  And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
  And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
  Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
  The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
  See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
  Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII

Oh moment, one and infinite!
  The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
  How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best
Shake the whole tree in the summer prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test!
"Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,

Venture the tree and a myriad such,
  When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
  Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all!
  Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
  That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
  And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
  Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
  His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
  And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
  They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII.

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;

So grew my own small life complete,
  As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

L

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
  Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
  And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

LI.

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
  And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
  When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

IV.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V.

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see! We meet and part; 'tis brief,
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
"Therefore she is immortally my bride;
"Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

X

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
  I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
    Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
  The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
"—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
    It will be at the sunrise! What's to blame?"

XI

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
  Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
  Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

XII

—Ah, but the fresher faces! "Is it true,
Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?
    "Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
  And if a man would press his lips to lip
"Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
  "The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

XIII

"It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
"More than if such a picture I prefer
  "Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.
"The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
"Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
  "A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, "Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

XVIII

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardships in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

XX

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task;
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask:
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I

I wonder do you feel to day
  As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
  In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
  Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
  Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
  The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
  Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
  Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey meal: and last,
  Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V.

The champaign with its endless fleece
  Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
  An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
  Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
  Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
  Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
  How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
  You that are just so much, no more
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
  Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
  See with your eyes, and set my heart

Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part, my part
In life, for good and ill.

X.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
  Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
  Fit for her nest and her treasure.
  Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
  Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
  Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
  Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I

THAT was I, you heard last night,
  When there rose no moon at all,

Nor, to pierce the strained and
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead and so was light.

II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music, that was I.

III

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V.

So wore night, the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI.

[illegible] of all the hopes,
[illegible] song and lute as well?
[illegible] you—"When life gropes
[illegible] for the path where fell
[illegible] last on the evening slopes

VII

[illegible] friend in that path shall be
To secure my step from wrong
[illegible] to count night day for me
Patient through the watch [illegible] long
[illegible] most with none to see

VIII

[illegible] say—as something bodes—
[illegible] the worst has yet a worse
[illegible] life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the task master's curse
[illegible] such music on the roads!

IX.

[illegible] moon succeeds the sun,
[illegible] pierce the midnight's tent
[illegible] the smallest one.
[illegible] e drops, where lightning rent,
[illegible] final storm begun—

X.

[illegible] hides its spot,
[illegible] voices fail

"In the darkness thick and hot,—
  "Shall another voice avail,
"That shape be where these are not?

XI.

"Has some plague a longer lease,
  "Proffering its help uncouth?
"Can't one even die in peace?
  "As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
"Is that face the last one sees?"

XII.

Oh how dark your villa was,
  Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
  Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!

To-day I venture all I know
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string, fold music's wing
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III

My whole life long I learned to love
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

I.

June was not over
  Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
  Had yet to blow,
  When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
  Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were,—
"If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

II.

Well, dear, in doors with you!
  True! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
  What's in the blossom
  June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
  Sweetness and redness,
  Eadem semper!
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking the roses,—my June will do rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,
  If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
  All petals, no prickles,
  Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
  And choose One indulgent
  To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know—
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV

And in turn we make you ours, we say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly king
In his gauze, because no honey bee?

XI

May not liking be so simple sweet,
If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
—A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

RESPECTABILITY.

I.

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
  Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
"Have recognized your plighted troth,
"Am sponsor for you: live in peace!"—
How many precious months and years
  Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
  Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

II.

How much of priceless life were spent
  With men that every virtue decks,
  And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
  Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
  And feel the Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

III.

I know! the world proscribes not love;
  Allows my finger to caress
  Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.

The world's good word!—the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

Escape me?
Never—
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear:
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed!

IN THREE DAYS.

I.

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn!
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

III.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,

Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowns the gold

IV

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
"That change the world might change as well
"Your fortune; and if joy delays,
"Be happy that no worse befell!"
What small fear, if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
"May throw no shadow on your ways;
"But years must teem with change untried,
"With chance not easily defied,
"With an end somewhere undescried."
No fear!—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I

NEVER any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.

'Once his love grown chill
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

IV.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied!

I, too, at love's brim
  Touched the sweet
I would die if death bequeathed
  Sweet to him

V

"Speak, I love thee best!"
  He exclaimed
"Let thy love my own foretell!"
  I confessed
"Clasp my heart on thine
  "Now unblamed
"Since upon thy soul as well
  "Hangeth mine!"

VI

Was it wrong to own,
  Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
  His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
  Beauty, youth
Since my lover gave me love,
  I gave these

VII

That was all I meant,
  —To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
  To content

Since he chose to change
  Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
  Was it strange?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
  On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
  — Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
  Till, all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
  "Mine before.

IX.

"What, she felt the while,
  "Must I think?
"Love 's so different with us men!"
  He should smile.
"Dying for my sake—
  "White and pink!
"Can't we touch these bubbles then
  "But they break?"

X

Dear, the pang is brief,
  Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
  Grows belief!

Well, this cold clay clod
  Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
  Is it God?

— — — —

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's page
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day,
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die!—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar brimmed.

VI.

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once! But no—the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE.

I.

Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.
God must judge the couple: leave them as they are
—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story!

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment?

III.

Who 's the culprit of them? How must he conceive
God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
"'T is but decent to profess oneself beneath her:
"Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!"

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes;
Then go live his life out! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes!
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI.

What 's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII.

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,

He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold:
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face!

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies

And sea, when once again my brow was bared
  After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
  What further may be sought for or declared?

VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
  (Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
  Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
  And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII

We were at Fano, and three times we went
  To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
  —My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
  Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII

And since he did not work thus earnestly
  At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
  And spread it out, translating it to song.

My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA.

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY.

I

STAND still, true poet that you are!
  I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us: when afar
  You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

II

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
  That loving hand of his which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
  Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

III

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
  I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
  Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
  Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but thou
  "Forever set'st our table praising,
"Keep'st the good wine till now!"

V

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
  With few or none to watch and wonder:
I 'll say—a fisher, on the sand
  By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
  Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
  And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII

And each bystander of them all
  Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
  —To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there 's the dye, in that rough mesh,
  The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
  As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
  Such hangings for his cedar-house,

That when gold-robed he took the throne
  In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X

Most like the centre-spike of gold
  Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb
What time, with ardours manifold,
  The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
  Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
  The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
  And priced and salable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
  To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:
  Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
  Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE GOTHA.

I.

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
  Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I 've put you so oft:
  What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we 're alone in the loft,—

II.

I, the poor organist here,
  Hugues, the composer of note,
Dead though, and done with, this many a year:
  Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III.

See, the church empties apace:
  Fast they extinguish the lights.
Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!
  Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds,
  Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
  —O you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
  —March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
  Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
  Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
  Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!
  Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
  Here's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII.

Page after page as I played,
  Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
  O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
  You, with brow ruled like a score,

Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
  Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X.

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!
  "Still, couldst thou take my intent,
"Know what procured me our Company's votes—
  "A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
"Parted the sheep from the goats!"

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
  Quick, ere my candle 's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
  I believe in you, but that 's not enough:
Give my conviction a clinch!

XII.

First you deliver your phrase
  —Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
  Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
  Volunteer needlessly help;
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
  So the cry 's open, the kennel 's a-yelp,
Argument 's hot to the close.

XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid ;
  Two must discept,—has distinguished ,
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did ;
  Four protests , Five makes a dart at the thing wished :
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV.

One says his say with a difference ,
  More of expounding, explaining !
All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance ,
  Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive ,
  Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant ,
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive ;
  Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant :
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

XVII.

Now, they ply axes, and crowbars ,
  Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
  Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two bars ?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
  On we drift : where looms the dim port?

One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota,
  Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe Gotha!

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
  Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like ... it's like ... for an instance I'm trying ...
  There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
  Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim—"But where's music, the dickens?
  "Blot ye the gold while your spider-web strengthens
  —Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous:
  Prove me such censure unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
  Hopes 'twas for something, his organ-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII.

Is it your moral of Life?
  Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
  Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII

Over our heads truth and nature—
  Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
  God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
  Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
  Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV

Ah but traditions, inventions,
  (Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions,
  Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
  Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit; try again; what's the clef?
  'Faith, 'tis no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
  Learning it once, who would lose it?

Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *meâ pænâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXIX

While in the roof, if I 'm right there,
. . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

THE

RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect

The Patriarch's Nuncio

The Republic's Admiral

LOYS DE DREUX, Knight Novice

Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, ANAEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB and others

Uninitiated Druses

Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's Attendants, Admiral's Force

TIME, 14—

PLACE, An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes

SCENE, A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

THE

RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, *and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off the robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving loose to exultation,—*

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function!
Rag. —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!
Ay. —Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount! Thy brood
Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corse;
Before, a presence like the morning—thine,

Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now
That day breaks!

Kar. Off then, with disguise at last!
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture! Cry,
'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
Who rise . . .

Ay. Who shout . . .

Rag. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*

Kar. Hold!

Ay. —Mine, I say;
And mine shall it continue!

Kar. Just this fringe!
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness

Above the gloom they droop in—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charactery;
And see yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble stone:
Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe!

Ay. What wouldst thou do, fox? Help!
—Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died!

Kar. Nay, hear the knave!
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his summons hence for Rhodes—
How know I else? Hear me denied my right
By such a knave!

Rag. [*interposing.*] Each ravage for himself!
Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found
Blood and a heap behind us, with us Djabal
Turned Hakeem, and before us Lebanon!
Yields the porch? Spare not! There his minions dragged
Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch!
Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there!
Onward in Djabal's name!

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. *A pause and silence.*

Kha. Was it for this,

Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
Dispute you for these gauds?

Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take the fringe,
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day

Kha. For pillage?

Kar. Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke
A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and Anael
Challenge his prime regard: but we may crave
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may claim
Reward: who grudges me my claim?

Ay. To-day
Is not as yesterday!

Ragh. Stand off!

Kha. Rebel you?
Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
His wrath on you, the day of our Return?

Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe!
Hound! must the earth

Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee?—and thee?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!

Kha. Oh, shame!
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge
Its birthplace, hither! "Let the sea divide
"These hunters from their prey," you said; "and safe
"In this dim islet's virgin solitude
"Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
"Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again,
"According to his word that, in the flesh
"Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
"He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
"And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
"Lead us himself to Lebanon once more."
Was 't not thus you departed years ago,
Ere I was born?

Druses. 'T was even thus, years ago.

Kha. And did you call—(according to old laws
Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage,
(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
The remnant of our tribe) a race self vowed

To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
The White cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?
Kar. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase
out?
These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
Than aught we fled—their Prefect, who began
His promised mere paternal governance,
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
Of crushing with our nation's memory
Each chance of our return, and taming us
Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
To end by this day's treason.
Kha. Say I not?
You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb proscribed,
Must yet receive one degradation more;
The Knights at last throw off the mask—transfer,
As tributary now and appanage,
This islet they are but protectors of,
To their own ever craving liege, the Church,
Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus.
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
(Pursuant to I know not what vile pact)
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
His predecessor in all wickedness.
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God

Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
Bird-like about his brow?

Druses. We saw—we heard!
Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies!

Kha. And as he said has not our Khalif done,
And so disposed events (from land to land
Passing invisibly) that when this morn
The pact of villainy complete, there comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
Their treason to consummate,—each will face
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation;
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses;
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;
That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
Grants us from Candia escort home at price
Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counted hers—
Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
Toward the harbour: is it now that you and you,
And you, selected from the rest to bear
The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!

Kar. True,
Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,
Thou art the youngest of us?—though employed

Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces
The cedar throne, his queen bride, art thou like
To occupy its lowest step that day!
Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
Forbidden such or such an honour,—say,
Would silence serve so amply?

Kha. Karshook thinks
I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks!
Honours? I have demanded of them all
The greatest!

Kar. I supposed so.

Kha. Judge yourselves!
Turn, thus: 'tis in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
The other lands from Syria; there they meet.
Now I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

Kar. For what
Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

Kha. That mine—
Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!
Djabal reserves that office for himself. [*A silence.*
Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves; since, near
As I approach him, nearer as I trust

Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as servant
To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon
None see him save myself and Anael: once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes!—without a sign
That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence: so have we learned
From Loys.

Kar. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

Kha. Peace!
Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude: announce

His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
Of Djabal! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South!
Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap the mast?
It nears apace! One galley and no more.
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!

Kha. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance!

Kha. Joy!
Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all forth!
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young!
Set free the captives, let the trampled raise
Their faces from the dust, because at length
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,

Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you, Druses?
Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
Reward and punishment, because he bade
Who has the right; for me, what should I say
But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
Without a check from you!

Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter LOYS.—*The Druses are silent.*

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him, friends!
[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'T is as our Isle broke out in song
For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune!
[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for you,
But first for Djabal: where 's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver mouth?

Kha. [*Aside to* KAR.] Loys, in truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!

Kar. [*To* KHA.] And who takes charge of Loys? That's forgotten,
Despite th[illegible]! Will Loys stand
And see his [illegible] slaughtered?

Loys [*As*[illegible] How they shrink
And whisper, [illegible] vapid faces! What?
The sight of [illegible] oppressors' garb

Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's shame
On those that bring our Order ill repute!
But all 's at end now, better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea:
The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for Djabal—

Kär. [*Aside.*] Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor, 't were easy to dispatch
A youngster. [*To* LOYS.] Djabal passed some minutes since
Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold! What, him dispatch?
The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon? Who,—noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of pride,—
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety?—I take charge of him!

[*To* LOYS.] Sir Loys,—

Loys. There, cousins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?

Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has intercourse with few or none
Till noontide: but, your pleasure?

Loys. "Intercourse
"With few or none?"—(Ah Khalil, when you spoke

I saw not your smooth face! All health!—and health
To Anael! How fares Anael?)—"Intercourse
"With few or none?" Forget you, I 've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof! He 'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblest stories . . .

Kha. Stories, say you?— Ah,
The quaint attire!

Loys. My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what 's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!

Kha. The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island tribe
Forget the world awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather?
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Kha. What 's that you wear?

Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.

You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I, bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
—Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,
And fight to death against the Infidel
—Not therefore, against you, you Christians with
Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes! But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to day?

Kha Ah, the new sword!

Loys See now! You handle sword
As 't were a camel staff! Pull! That 's my motto,
Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

Kha No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve!

Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose—it should poise itself!

Kha [*waving with irrepressible exultation the sword*]
We are a nation, Loys, of old fame
Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!
[*Remembering himself*] But I forget—you bid me
Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight scares you not?
(The People I will make of him and them!

Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once !)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must !

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 't is thy cursed race's token,
Frank pride, no special insolence of thine !
[*Aloud.*] Tarry, and I will do your bidding, Loys !
[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you ! I proceed to Djabal straight.
Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says !
Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were true ?

[KHALIL *goes, followed by the* Druses.

Loys. Tu Dieu ! How happy I shall make these Druses !
Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me
To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,
Then take the first pretence for stealing off
From these poor islanders, present myself
Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,
And (as best proof of ardour in its cause
Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)
Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,
This Prefect and his villanous career ?
The princely Synod ! All I dared request
Was his dismissal ; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—
Myself may cure the Isle diseased !

And well
For them, they did so ! Since I never felt

How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt
On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's story,
He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—
And me, too, since the story brought me here—
Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.
                                        Long days
At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known
An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me
The great black eyes I must forget?
                                        Why, fool,
Recall them, then? My business is with Djabal,
Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him?—
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day!

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should think himself a God!
I—Hakeem? To have wandered through the world,
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,

For my one chant with many a change, my tale
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nor less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys
To pass probation here, the getting access
By Loys to the Prefect, worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank,—a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem?
                    And I feel this first to-day!
Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed
Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?
Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
"Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a lad,
"Returns from traversing the world, a man,
"Able to take revenge, lead back the march
"To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays?
But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all's changed!
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?
"True—but my jugglings wrought that!" Put I heart
Into our people where no heart lurked?—"Ah,
"What cannot an impostor do!"
                    Not this!
Not do this which I do! Not bid, avaunt

Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me!
—Nor even get a hold on me! 'T is now—
This day—hour—minute—'t is as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived!
And now what do I?—hasten to the few
Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
"As I professed, I did believe myself!
"Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
"If Ayoob, Karshook saw——Maani there
"Must tell you how I saw my father sink;
"My mother's arms twine still about my neck;
"I hear my brother shriek, here 's yet the scar
"Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
"If you had woke like me, grown year by year
"Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
"Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?
"I walked the world, asked help at every hand;
"Came help or no? Not this and this? Which helps
"When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
"The Druses here, all here, but Hakeem's self,
"The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
"Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
"My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised Hakeem
"More than performs the Djabal—you absolve?
"—Me, you will never shame before the crowd
"Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs surround
"The few deceived, the many unabused,
"—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them

The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No Khalif,
"But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal—not" . . .

Enter KHALIL *hastily.*

Kha. —God Hakeem!
'Tis told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
As we! and mothers lift on high their babes
Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are proud!
Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is thine!
Take it! my lord and theirs be thou adored!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Adored—but I renounce it utterly!

Kha. Already are they instituting choirs
And dances to the Khalif, as of old
'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.

Dja. [*Aside.*] I abjure it!
'Tis not mine—not for me!

Kha. Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain herbs,
Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar fruit?
Oh, let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun-rise on the Isle—he can see now!
The shamed Druse women never wept before
They can look up when we reach home, they say.
Smell!—sweet cedar, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—
Sweet!—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
Alone do nothing for thee! 'Tis my office
Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus,

Thou bidst me. At this self-same moment tend
The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
Who were the trusty watchers!—thou forget?
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .

Dja. [*Aside.*] Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
On went I, solely for my people's sake:
I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
"Hakeem—with Anael by!"

Kha. [*Aside.*] Ah, he is rapt!
Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.

Dja. [*Aside.*] To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
Great heart's word that will tell her! I could gasp
Doubtless one such word out, and die.

[*Aloud.*] You said
That Anael . . .

Kha. . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee,
Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know:
Something to say that will not from her mind!

I know not what—"Let him but come!" she said.

Dja. [*Half-apart.*] My nation—all my Druses—how fare they?
Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock around
That banner of a brow!

Dja. [*Aside.*] And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!
– Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
Precede me there, forestall my story there,
Tell it in mocks and jeers!

I lose myself!
Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
I need the veriest child—why not this child?

[*Turning [illegible] to* KHALIL.

You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished
Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
Could vow, so nourished, to love only one
Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds
Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
Who thus implicitly can execute
My bidding? What have I done, you could not?
Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,
This Prefect? All's in readiness?

Kha. The sword,
The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.

Dja. —Why did you despair?

Kha. I know our nation's state? Too surely know,
As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like ours
Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged
And spoke,—"The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!
"Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
"In his pavilion—then arise!"—my speech
Fell idly—'twas, "Be silent, or worse fare!
"Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete!
"Who may'st thou be that takest on thee to thrust
"Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?" No!
Only a mission like thy mission renders
All these obedient at a breath, subdues
Their private passions, brings their wills to one!

Dja. You think so?

Kha. Even now—when they have witnessed
Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
To perish! No! When these have kissed thy feet
At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present
Clear,—for the future, even Hakeem's mission
May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Shall rule them thus renewed.—I talk to thee!

Dja. And wisely. He is Anael's brother, pure
As Anael's self. Go say, I come to her.
Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL *goes.*
Oh, not confess
To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half-authorize its means! Only to her
Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
When should my first child-like sin have stopped
If not when I, whose lone youth hurried past,
Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
At length recovered in one Druse all joy?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
Would I confess! On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy! [*Goes.*

Enter ANAEL, *and* MAANI *who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses.*

An. Those saffron vestures of the tabret girls!
Comes Djabal, think you?

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams?—Nay, all the tresses off
My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says
That I am lovely!

Maa. Lovely . nay, that hangs
Awry

An. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?
The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
The maiden of our class Are you content
For Djabal as for me?

Maa Content, my child.

An Oh mother, tell me more of him! He comes
Even now— tell more fill up my soul with him!

Maa And did I not yes surely . tell you all?

An What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maa. 'Tis writ
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
Superbly.

An Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
Yet that 's no change, for a grave current lived
—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
While . ah the bliss he would discourse to me
In that enforced still fashion, word on word!
'Tis the old current which must swell thro' that,
For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?
'Tis surely not his voice will change!
—If Hakeem
Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;
Possessed, but was not it!
He lived with you?

Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
And heard me vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day . . proceed!

Maa. Once more, then: from the time of his return
In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,
—Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—
I knew not in the man that child; the man
Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,
How he had gone from land to land to save
Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread;
And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused:
But never till that day when, pale and worn
As by a persevering woe, he cried
"Is there not one Druse left me?"—and I showed
The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
To ope and shut, the while, above us both!)
—His mission was the mission promised us;
The cycle had revolved; all things renewing,
He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
His children home anon, now veiled to work
Great purposes: the Druses now would change!

An. And they have changed! And obstacles did sink,
And furtherances rose! And round his form

Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!
My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
For you than for myself! Did I but watch
Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
One of the throng, how proud were I—tho' ne'er
Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be chosen
His own from all, the most his own of all,
To be exalted with him, side by side
Lead the exulting Druses, meet ... ah, how
Worthily meet the maidens who await
Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
This honor, in their eyes? So bright are they
Who saffron vested sound the tabret there,
The girls who throng there in my dream! One hour
And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?—
[*Suddenly to* MAANI
Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert
To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, who when he comes . . .
[DJABAL *enters*.] Oh why [illegible]
[illegible]not kneel to you?
Dja. Rather, 't is I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!
[illegible]

For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—
Never a God to me! 'T is the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our people,
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!
You mean that I should never kneel to you
—So I will kneel!

Dja. [*preventing her.*] No—no!
[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*
Ha, have you chosen
[illegible] familiar with our ancient garb? But, Djabal,
Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time
That I may plan more, perfect more! My blood
Beats, beats!
[*Aside.*] Oh must I then—since Loys leaves us
Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—own
That when I saw that stranger, heard his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have been wrought
In other frames, though not in mine, by Loys
Or any mere mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?

How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?
Dja. [*Aside*] Avow the truth? I cannot! In what words
Avow that all she loved in me was false?
—Which yet has served that flower like love of hers
To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom
Could I take down the prop work, in itself
So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage—might these still
Bask in the sun unconscious their own strength
Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently withdrawn!
But no, the beauteous fabric crashes too
'T is not for my sake but for Anael's sake
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans!
Oh could I vanish from her, quit the Isle!
And yet—a thought comes here my work is done
At every point, the Druses must return—
Have convoy to their birthplace back, whoe'er
The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that 't is for myself,
For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
I stay now, not for them to slay or spare
The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?
He cannot bar their passage from the Isle,
What would his death be but my own reward?
Then, mine I will forego It is foregone!

Let him escape with all my House's blood!
Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
Above the world. She cannot touch that world
By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
Able to link my present with my past,
My life in Europe with my Island life,
Thence, able to unmask me, I've disposed
Safely at last at Rhodes, and

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee!
Dja. Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be!
An. [*Aside.*] Loys! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so!
Kha. Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,
I told thee not in the glad press of tidings
Of higher import, Loys is returned
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung!
Dja. —And asks for me?
Kha. Thou knowest all things! Thee in chief he greets,
But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares: were Loys
Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Shame winds me with her tether round and round!

An. [*Aside.*] Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,
The little I can do, be done; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Before, there were so few deceived! and now
There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
But, having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word!
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!
Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle!
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency:
There's Anael!

An. Please you?

Dja. Anael—none but she!
[*To* ANAEL.] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him.

Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

An. [*Aside*] As I divined: he bids me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept!
Let me see Loys!

Loys. [*Without*] Djabal!

An. [*Aside*] 'Tis his voice.
The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance
Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close
With what I viewed at distance: let myself
Probe this delusion to the core!

Dja. He comes.
Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits
Till I return once more—and but once more!

ACT III

ANAEL *and* LOYS

An. Here leave me! Here I wait another. 'Twas
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not feel?
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me: you
Are here—I only feel you here!

An. No more!

Loys. But once again, whom could you love? I dare,
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,
Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
To say your breathing passes through me, changes
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love! You said
You could love one . . .

An. One only! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him, we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,
I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go!

Loys. Him
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!
[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but myself?
Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No,
She sees into my heart's core! What is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond
To dream I could call up . . .
. . . What never dream
Yet feigned! 'Tis love! Oh Anael, speak to me!
Djabal—

An. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber
At noon! [*She passes the room.*

Loys [*Aside.*] And am I not the Prefect now?
Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love? The past
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
Content beside her in the Isle? What work
This knowledge in me now? Her eye has broken
The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake
I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
To live without!
—As I must live! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me — never shall
Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
Thy soldier!

An. Djabal you demand, comes!

Loys. [*Aside.*] What wouldst thou, Loys? See him? Nought beside
Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here, made known
The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
Redress for them; and shall I meet him now,
When nought is wanting but a word of his,
To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
Honour away,—to cast my lot among

His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
Breaking my high pact of companionship
With those who graciously bestowed on me
The very opportunities I turn
Against them! Let me not see Djabal now!

An. The Prefect also comes!

Loys. [*Aside.*] Him let me see,
Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—
And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me ' . . .

Let me fly!
The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever! [*Goes.*

An. Yes, I am calm now; just one way remains—
One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else: Loys, Djabal, stand
On either side—two men! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed!
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way!—

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. [*to himself.*] No moment is to waste then; 't is resolved.
If Khalil may be trusted to lead back

My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—
All 's over. Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.
And now, to Anael!

An. Djabal, I am thine!

Dja. Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had not been?

An. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thought?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thought?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

An. (My secret 's safe, I shall surprise him yet!)
Djabal, I knew your secret from the first.
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
"This dim secluded house where the sea beats
"Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell
"To them; this august form will follow me,
"Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him
"And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
"Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!
"His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
"His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
"He let me love him: in that moment's bliss
"I shall forget my people pine for home—

"They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!"
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me!

Dja. [*Apart.*] And she loved me! Nought remained
But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?

An. Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns all,
I know—or should know: and I would do much,
Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
As we report!
Death!—a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance!
Death!—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil, for Maani—what for thee?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!

Dja. [*avoiding her.*] I come for that—to say
Such an occasion is at hand: 't is mine:
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever!

An. We part? Just so! I have succumbed,—
I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less

Will serve than such approval of my faith.
Then, we part not! Remains there no way short
Of that? Oh not that!
Death!—yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands; its eyes filmed—"Nay, it sleeps,"
I said, "will wake to-morrow well." 't was dead.

Dja. I stand here and time fleets. Anael—I come
To bid a last farewell to you: perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, *breathlessly*

Kha. He 's here! The Prefect! Twenty guards,
No more—no sign he dreams of danger. All
Awaits thee only. Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man!
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near
The fleet from Candia steering!

Dja. [*Aside.*] All is lost!
—Or won?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred robe,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place
Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recall,
I slay—'t is forced on me! As I began
I must conclude—so be it!

Kha. For the rest,
Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat

Thy post again of thee: tho' danger none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect!

An. [*Aside.*] And 't is now that Djabal
Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed to you
Or any Druse; what peril there may be,
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on!
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else.
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!

Kha. Anael, and no part for us!
[*To* Dja.] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

Dja. [*to* An.] Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile
Turns stranger. Shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul . .
From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile or some aery thing:
What is there in his death?

An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?

Dja. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within: once these
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me: this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.
Go, Khalil, hurry all! No pause, no pause!
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Kha. What sign? and who the bearer?

Dja. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she stands!
Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.
Anael, not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber!
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!
(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will
Be faithful?

An. [*taking the ring.*] I would fain be worthy of you!

[*Trumpet without.*

Kha. He comes!

Dja. And I too come!

An. One word, but one!
Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?
Then? On the instant?

Dja. I exalted? What?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged, our tribe
Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
Exalted!

Kha. He is here!

Dja. Away—away! [*They go.*

Enter the PREFECT *with* Guards, *and* LOYS.

The Prefect [*to* Guards.] Back, I say, to the galley every guard!
That 's my sole care now; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers; I embark
O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.
Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys?
[*To a* Guard *who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here forthwith!
[*The* Guards *go.*
Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect now?
You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . .

Pref.—When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post?—Ah, meek
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!

And wish him the like meekness: for so staunch
A servant of the church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!
You 've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!
I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!

Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
To leave your scene of . .

Pref. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
We had enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you 'll need shortly! Did it never breed
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
When I, the insatiate . . and so forth—was bent
On having a partaker in my rule?
Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
If not that I might also shift—what on him?
Half of the peril, Loys!

Loys. Peril?

Pref. Hark you!
I 'd love you if you 'd let me—this for reason,
You save my life at price of . . well, say risk
At least, of yours. I came a long time since
To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me tame
These savage wizards, and reward myself—

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?

Pref. Loys, the Knights! we doubtless understood
Each other; as for trusting to reward
From any friend beside myself . . . no, no!
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,

And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
When I was on them: but with age comes caution:
And stinging pleasures please less and sting more
Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were brighter
Than ever ('faith, there 's yet one Anael left,
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys looked brighter,
But silenter the town, too, as I passed:
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar
Stealing to catch me. brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)—I say,
Just when for the remainder of my life
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect.
Therefore I say, I 'd love you!

Loys. Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
But I will back—will yet unveil you!
Pref. Me?
To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
My hand next morning shook, for value paid!
To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
Merely one hundred! To Sir—
Loys. See! you dare
Inculpate the whole Order; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!
Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence too,
And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events.

Stay here till they withdraw you. You 'll inhabit
My palace—sleep, perchance, in the alcove
Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
Good! and now disbelieve me if you can,—
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb.

Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Pref. Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash:
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We 'll hope. Ha, ha! [*Goes through the arras.*

Loys. Assure me but . . . he 's gone!
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,
I, who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and them!
Oh, opportunest of discoveries! I
Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!
Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? yes,
The same hyæna groan-like laughter! Quick—
To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe!
Djabal! She 's mine at last. Djabal, I say! [*Goes.*

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. Let me but slay the Prefect. The end now!
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object. [*Seeing the robe, etc. disposed.*
Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee, Djabal,
Far other mood befitted! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder!
[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me: I dare take the Robe. Why not
The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more
Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet—
[*Lays down the tiar.*
[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes! [*Taking the sword.*
If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So, feet
Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts! He 'll lift
Which arm to push the arras wide?—or both?
Stab from the neck down to the heart—there stay!
Near he comes—nearer—the next footstep! Now!
[*As he dashes aside the arras,* ANAEL *is discovered.*

Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?
Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEL *screams.*] So slow to feel
'T is not a sight for you to look upon?
A moment's work—but such work! Till you go,
I must be idle—idle, I risk all!

[*Pointing to her hair.*

Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
But with the dagger 't is, I have to do!

An. With mine!

Dja. Blood—Anael?

An. Djabal, 't is thy deed!
It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—
Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess
'T was not I, but thyself . . not I have . . Djabal!
Speak to me!

Dja. Oh, my punishment!

An. Speak to me
While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!
When the command passed from thy soul to mine,
I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
And the approaching exultation,—"Make
"One sacrifice!" I said,—and he sat there,
Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
Thy fire with music burst into my brain,
'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance
It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed!

Dja. It is my deed!

An. His blood all this!—this! and . .
And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not—now
Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!
It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
At least confirm me! Djabal, blood gushed forth—
He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall
Prone as asleep—why else is death called sleep?
Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'Tis sin, I know,—
Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps
On his red breast—is here! 'Tis the small groan
Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!
Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!
[*Following him up and down.*
Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!

Dja. [*sinks on his knees.*] Thus!
Behold my change! You have done nobly! I!—

An. Can Hakeem kneel?

Dja. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!
I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.
No—hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and ever,
The deed is mine! Oh think upon the past!

An. [*to herself.*] Did I strike once, or twice, or many times?

Dja. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,
Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, "Without

"A miracle this cannot be"—I said
"Be there a miracle!"—for I saw you!
An. His head lies south the portal!
Dja. —Weighed with this
The general good, how could I choose my own?
What matter was my purity of soul?
Little by little I engaged myself—
Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me!
An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me?—Who said
You were not Hakeem? And your miracles—
The fire that plays innocuous round your form?
[*Again changing her whole manner.*
Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!
Dja. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount
(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle,
Beneath their former selves) should comprehend
The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets
That would not easily affect the meanest
Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate
The best of our poor tribe! Again that eye?
An. [*after a pause springs to his neck.*] Djabal, in this there can be no deceit!
Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
Maani is but human, Khalil human,
Loys is human even—did their words
Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you
So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me

So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect
And the blood, there—could I see only you?
—Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

[As DJABAL *[illegible] arms, and puts her [illegible]*

Hakeem would save me! Thou art Djabal! Crouch!
Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—
Full midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs,
Based on the living rock, devoured not by
The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone!
Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through!
—Let us come, Djabal!

Dja. Whither come?

An. At once—
Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!
So, feel less pain! Let them deride,—thy tribe
Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride!
Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

Dja. Where come?

An. Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,
Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now—)
That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
Better than ever!) Come, receive their doom
Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!

Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
Be mine! Come!

Dja. Never! More shame yet? and why?
Why? You have called this deed mine—it is mine!
And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with fate? The past
Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true.
Hear me! The argosies touch land by this;
They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies.
What if we reign together?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good?—by means
Of even their superstition, plant in them
New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek
Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
We two will be divine to them—we are!
All great works in this world spring from the ruins
Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Babels men block out, Babylons they build.
I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim
The deed! Retire! You have my ring—you bar
All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land!

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

Dja. [*putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head.*] And from this moment that I dare ope wide
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion: for I know myself,
And what am I to personate. No word?

[ANAEL goes.

'Tis come on me at last! His blood on her——
What memories will follow that! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow!
Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou, presume
To work in this foul earth by means not foul?
Scheme, as for heaven,—but, on the earth, be glad
If a least ray like heaven's be left thee!

Thus

I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. [*A noise without.*]

This should be Khalil and my Druses!
Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee, sword!
Druses, 't is Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL *hides the Khandjar in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal!—but no time for words.
You know who waits there? [*Pointing to the alcove.*

Well!—and that 't is there
He meets the Nuncio? Well! Now, a surprise—
He there—

Dja. I know—

Loys. ——is now no mortal's lord,
Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—
He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!
Oh shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!

I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I felt
What you were loath to speak—your need of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me; have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule: he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you urged
Of old to me—I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord,—but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour!
You gaze at me! Hear greater wonders yet—
I throw down all the fabric I have built!
These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . but
Of that another time; what 's now to say,
Is—I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother! I am Druse like you!
My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
Your people's, which is now my people: for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
She loves me—Khalil's sister——

Djabal. Anael?

Loys. Start you?
Seems what I say, unknightly? Thus it chanced:
When first I came, a novice, to the isle . . .

Enter one of the Nuncio's Guards from the alcove.

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!
And here— [*Others enter from the alcove.*
[*Pointing to* DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him—this is he!

[*They surround* DJABAL.

Loys. Madmen—what is 't you do? Stand from my friend,
And tell me!

Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
Surely no part! But slay him not! The Nuncio
Commanded, slay him not!

Loys. Speak, or . . .

Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools! How Djabal?

[*A Guard lifts* DJABAL'S *robe;* DJABAL *flings down the khandjar.*

Loys. [*after a pause*] Thou hast received some insult worse than all,
Some outrage not to be endured—
[*To the Guards.*] Stand back!
He is my friend—more than my friend! Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation!

Guard. No!

No provocation! 'T is a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif—'t is on that pretence—
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now comes back to life and light again—
All is just now revealed, I know not how,
By one of his confederates—who, struck
With horror at this murder, first apprised
The Nuncio. As 't was said, we find this Djabal
Here where we take him.

Dja. [*Aside.*] Who broke faith with me?

Loys. [*to* DJABAL.] Hear'st thou? Speak! Till thou speak, I keep off these,
Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend,
Whose tale was of an inoffensive race,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged
My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?

Dja. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All 's true!
No more concealment! As these tell thee, all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
To crush this handful: the Venetians land
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part!
Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me more;
It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
We are a separated tribe: farewell!

Loys. Oh where will truth be found now? Canst thou so
Belie the Druses? Do they share thy crime?

Those thou professest of our Breton stock,
Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now
Khalil, my friend—he spoke with me—no word
Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who
Loves me—she spoke no word of this!

Dja. Poor boy!
Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?
We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux?
No—older than the oldest—princelier
Than Europe's princeliest tribe are we. Enough
For thee, that on our simple faith we found
A monarchy to shame your monarchies
At their own trick and secret of success.
The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
The palace-step of him whose life ere night
Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth
The kind interposition of a boy
—Can only save ourselves if thou concede?
—Khalil admire thee? He is my right hand,
My delegate!—Anael accept thy love?
She is my bride!

Loys. Thy bride? She one of them?

Dja. My bride!

Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!
She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
Ah—who but she directed me to find
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil
Bade me seek Djabal there, too! All is truth!

What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?
And I—have I desired to shift my part,
Evade my share in her design? 'T is well!

Dja. Loys, I have wronged thee—but unwittingly:
I never thought there was in thee a virtue
That could attach itself to what thou deemest
A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,
But that is over: all is over now,
Save the protection I ensure against
My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,
Thou art secure and may'st depart: so, come!

Loys. Thy side?—I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir Loys! 'T is too true!
And only by his side thou may'st escape!
The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock
About the palace—will be here—on thee—
And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
O' the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we
Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly!
The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are bought
In thy tribe's persecution! [*To* Loys.] Keep by him!
They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince returned:

He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
Are life and death!

[*Loys springing at the khandjar* DJABAL *had thrown down, seizes him by the throat.*]

Thus by his side am I!
Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare,
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place!
Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes may cluster:
Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
How say they?—God art thou! but also here
Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church calls
Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed! Hordes of thy Druses flock without:
Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound and thee!
Die! [DJABAL *remains calm.*] Implore my mercy,
Hakeem, that my scorn
May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade;
I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
Had such! Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot!

[DJABAL *still silent.*

Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,
So much! I cannot kill him so!

[*After a pause.*] Thou art
Strong in thy cause, then—dost outbrave us, then!
Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet

His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse!
Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried
By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me this,
Or I will do God's office! What, shalt thou
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
Want even an executioner? Consent,
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will!

Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest!
[*Loys gives it.*
Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!
[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me? [*Shouts without.*
Hearest thou? I hear
No plainer than long years ago I heard
That shout—but in no dream now! They return!
Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well!

ACT V.

The Uninitiated Druses, *filling the hall tumultuously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great

fight word? —"Lebanon?" (My daughter—my daughter!)

But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back fin of a water-serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO *with Guards.*

Nuncio [*to his* Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice

Ye talk of that accuseth him ... And tell

Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope

Bid him approve him ... Knight ... !

To this black disembo... of the ...

[*To the* Druses.] Ah children ... what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive ... through

To smile their very last on you! I came

To gather one and all you wandering sheep

Into my fold, as though a father came ...

As though, in coming, a father should ...

[*To his* Guards.] (Ten, twelve

—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?

The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)

[*To the* Druses.] As if one came to a son's house, I say,

So did I come—no guard with me—to find ...

Alas—alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout!
Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slain!
Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio. Even so!
I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain!
While most he plotted for your good, that father
(Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain!
[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—with
 me,
For being duped by his cajoleries!
Are these the Christians? These the docile crew
My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)
[*To his* Attendants, *who whisper.*] What say ye does this
 wizard style himself?
Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?
What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif,
Dead near three hundred years ago, come back
In flesh and blood again?

Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?
He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man
Is our dead Prefect's friend! Tear him!

Nuncio. Ye dare not!
I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,
The [illegible] power behind me, [illegible]
Those years have witnessed [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

By sorceries, cheats—alas! the same tricks, tried
On my poor children in this nook of the earth,
Could triumph, that have been successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through:
" *Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*
" Cretes and Arabians"—you are duped the last!
Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
That so much love was wasted—every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .
That . . . never will I speak his hated name!
[*To his Servants.*] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter
Called their arch-wizard by? [*they whisper.*] Oh, Djabal was 't?

Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?

Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)
How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .
Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .
What I sailed hither solely to divulge—
How by his spells the demons were allured
To seize you: not that these be aught save lies
And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,
By measures such as these he would have led you
Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?
Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

Druses. [illegible]

Nuncio. [illegible] —Be of one privilege amerced?
No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!
No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid
Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Karshook says; he knows but what Khalil says, who knows just what Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL *and the initiated* Druses.

Kha. Venice and her deliverance are at hand!
Their fleet stands through the harbour! Hath he slain
The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?

Nuncio. [*to* Attendants.] What's this of Venice? Who's this boy?
[Attendants *whisper.*] One Khalil?
Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?
[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:
Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?
Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!
[*They spring* [illegible] *hold them back.*
Stay! No more bloodshed! [illegible] youth!
Whom [illegible] whom, my child!

Thou know'st not what these know, what these declare.
I am an old man as thou seest—have done
With life; and what should move me but the truth?
Art thou the only fool of thy tribe?
'T is I interpret for thy tribe!

Kha. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,
The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?
They plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] If it be true! Venice?—Oh, never true!
Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
And fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!
Oh, to be duped this way!

Kha. Ere he appear
And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Nor any way to stretch the arch wizard stark
Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,
The trunk were easily stilled. [*To the Druses.*] He? Bring him forth!
Since so you needs will have it, I assent!
You 'd judge him, say you, on the spot? confound
The sorcerer in his very circle? Where 's [illegible]
Our short [illegible] fellow friend who said
He 'd [illegible] guerdon by one stroke [illegible]
Bring, Djabal, [illegible]

Druses. Ay, bring him forth!
The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,
And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!
Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

Kha. You dare not so insult him! What, not see . . .
(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
Untrusted—they know nothing of our Khalif!)
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
'T is but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return!
That all may say ye would have trusted him
Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For, think—
What wonder when his change takes place? But now
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself!
No—could I ask and have, I would not ask
The change yet!

Enter Djabal *and* Loys.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—
For our sakes pardon these besotted men—
Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet now
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—
Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael?—See!

Loys. [*to* DJA.] Here are thy people! Keep thy word
 to me!

Dja. Who of my people hath accused me?

Nuncio. So!
So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?
A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!
May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now
That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge
Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning to* DJA.] as these
 bid me,
Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,
Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!
Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells,
 children?
But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)
Thou art a prophet?—wouldst entice thy tribe
From me?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!
Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . . .

Dja. . . Which how thou camest to be, I say not now,
Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!
—Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of spells?
If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
To ratify thy compact with her foe,
The Hospitallers for this Isle—withdraw
Her warrant o' the deed which reinstates
My people in their freedom, tricked away
By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us
To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—

— Then will be time to try what spells can do!
Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?

Nuncio. Lo ye!
He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!
No! The renowned Republic was and is
The Patriarch's friend: 't is not for courting Venice
That I—that these implore thy blood of me!
Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so subtle?
Ye, Druses, hear him! Will ye be deceived?
How he evades me! Where 's the miracle
He works? I bid him to the proof—fish up
Your galley full of bezants that he sank!
That were a miracle! One miracle!
Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years.
I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth
To save you from the good Republic's rage
When she shall find her Fleet was summoned here
To aid the mummeries of a knave like this!

[*As the* Druses *hesitate, his* Attendants *whisper.*

Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the while
One who, his close confederate till now,
Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
And every miracle a cheat! Who throws me
His head? I make three offers, once I offer,—
And twice . . .

Dja. Let who moves perish at my foot!

Kha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael, Maani,
Why tarry they?

Druses [*to each other*]. He can! He can! Live fire—

[*To the* NUNCIO.] I say he can; old man! Thou know'st
him not—
Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
Plays fawning round him. See! The change begins!
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm!
Look not at me! It was not I!

Dja. What Druse
Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
Of my own people, as thou said'st, have raised
A voice against me.

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Venice to come! Death!

Dja. [*continuing.*] Confess and go unscathed, however
false!
Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
How said I, Loys?

Nuncio. [*to his* Attendants *who whisper.*] Ah, ye
counsel so?
[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
Is fooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him.

[*They bring in a veiled* Druse.

Loys. Now, Djabal, now!

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! Make a ring, sons!—Speak!
Expose this Djabal—what he was, and how;
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished; all,
Explicitly as late 't was spoken to these
My servants. I absolve and pardon thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?

Dja. Speak,
Recreant!

Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
Back, Khalil!

Kha. I go back? Thus go I back!
[*To* AN.] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif! Thus!

[*He tears away* ANAEL'S *veil*, DJABAL *folds his arms and bows his head*; *the* Druses *fall back*; LOYS *springs from the side of* DJABAL *and the* NUNCIO.

Loys. Then she was true—she only of them all!
True to her eyes—may keep those glorious eyes,
And now be mine, once again mine! Oh, Anael!
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
That blood could soil that hand? nay, 't is mine—Anael,
—Not mine?—Who offer thee before all these
My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say
That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
Lies—say but that he lies!

Dja. Thou, Anael?

Loys. Nay Djabal, nay, one chance for me—the last!
Thou hast had every other; thou hast spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee—let me
Speak first now; I will speak now!

Nuncio. Loys, pause!
Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's choicest stock,
Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first sword:
This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample
To earth?

Loys. [*to* AN.] Who had foreseen that one day Loys
Would stake these gifts against some other good
In the whole world? I give them thee! I would
My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
Tread on their very neck! 'T is not by gifts
I put aside this Djabal: we will stand—
We do stand, see, two men! Djabal, stand forth
Who 's worth her, I or thou? I—who for Anael
Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
True way—left thee each by-path, boldly lived
Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou?
Me!—love me, Anael! Leave the blood and him!
[*To* DJA.] Now speak—now, quick on this that I have said,—
Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man!

Dja. [*to* AN.] And was it thou betrayedst me? 'T is well!
I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest: life

Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us:
For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate! By thee I was seduced! by thee
I perish: yet do I—can I repent?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I lived
—Nothing; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something;—now, each has destroyed
The other—and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere man's nature! And I yield to it:
I love thee, I who did not love before!

An. Djabal!

Dja. It seemed love, but it was not love—
How could I love while thou adoredst me?
Now thou despisest, art above me so
Immeasurably! Thou, no other, doomest
My death now; this my steel shall execute
Thy judgment; I shall feel thy hand in it!
Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee!

An. My Djabal!

Dja. Dost hesitate? I force thee then! Approach,
Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;
No further evil waits me. Speak the doom!
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys!

Anael Hakeem! [*She falls dead*

[*The Druses scream, grovelling before him*

Ah Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!
Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!
Ha, dog, how sayest thou?

[*They surround and seize the* Nuncio *and his Guards* Loys *flings himself upon the body of* Anael, *on which* Djabal *continues to gaze as stupefied*

Nuncio Caitiffs! Have ye eyes?
Whips, racks should teach you! What, his fools? his dupes?
Leave me! unhand me!

Khalil [*approaching* Djabal *timidly*] Save her for my sake!
She was already thine, she would have shared
To-day thine exaltation think, this day
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!

Nuncio [*struggling with those who have seized him*] What, because
His leman dies for him? You think it hard
To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice
Of deaths should suit you!

Khalil [*bending over* Anael's *body*] Just restore her life!
So little does it! there—the eyelids tremble!
'Twas not my breath that made them: and the lips
Move of themselves, I could restore her life!
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed

On our free converse: we are better taught.
See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See,
She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!
Go not without her to the cedars, lord!
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak:
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
Under their feet!
What way—not one way yet
To foil them? None? [*Observing* DJABAL'S *face.*
What ails the Khalif? Ah,
That ghastly face! A way to foil them yet!
[*To the* Druses.] Look to your Khalif, Druses! Is that face
God Hakeem's? Where is triumph,—where is . . . what
Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself!
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
In splendour! Now, bear witness! here I stand—
I challenge him exalt himself, and I

Become, for that, a Druse like all of you!

The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thyself, O Hakeem!

Dja. [*advances*] I can confess now all from first to last.

There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds—the* Druses *shout, his eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.*

—Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have crawled
But yesterday within these impure courts
Where now ye stand erect!—Not grand enough?
—What more could be conceded to such beasts
As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
Than a mere man?—A man among such beasts
Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,
Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—
With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,
The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away—
Out of mere mortal ken—above the cedars—
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeople the old solitudes,—through thee,
My Khalil! Thou art full of me—I fill

Thee full—thy hands thus fill thee! Yestereve
—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
Of all to do, requiring word of mine
To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts,
All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
My people home whate'er betide!

[*Turning to the* Druses.] Ye take
This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Dja. [*raises* Loys.] Then to thee, Loys! How I wronged thee, Loys!
—Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus
Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul
The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,
For those I leave!— to seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
—One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart,—perchance,
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
His last word to the living speaks! This done,

Resume thy course, and, first amid the first
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What shall withstand thee then?

[*He bends to* ANAEL.] And last to thee!
Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
Exalted thee? A vain dream—hast thou not
Won greater exaltation? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself. As he falls, supported by* KHALIL *and* LOYS, *the* VENETIANS *enter; the* ADMIRAL *advances.*

Admiral. God and St Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the* Druses *shout, and move tumultuously forward,* LOYS *drawing his sword.*

Djabal [*leading them a few steps between* KHALIL *and* LOYS.]
On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses!

[*Dies.*

END OF VOL. III.

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